MOKUMOKUREN

6

THE SUMMER HIKARU DIED

BECAUSE Y'SEE, HIKARU-KUN...

...YOU'RE NOT NOUNUKI-SAMA.

CHAPTER 27

THIS WHOLE "SACRIFICING ONE THING TO SAVE ANOTHER" IDEA...

...IS A TERRIBLE MISCON-CEPTION.

HOW... DID YOU...

... FIND US ...?

THE SUMMER

HIKARU DIED

MOKUMOKUREN

6

CHAPTER 27

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FWUP

TRACKER ON YOUR SHOE.

IT'S YOU...

THE HECK!? Y'HERE TA CHOP MY HEAD OFF AGAIN?

ZWIP

BEFORE HE TRIES ANYTHIN', I GOTTA...!

FIRST OF ALL...

...“NOUNUKI-SAMA” DOESN’T EXIST.

IT’S AN IMAGINARY GOD PEOPLE CAME UP WITH.

FWOOOO

HUH?

SO THEN, WHAT AM I...?

IN THE SAME WAY THAT YOU TOOK ON HIKARU INDOU'S IDENTITY ...

...YOU TOOK THE PLACE OF A GOD THAT SHOULDN'T EXIST.

YOU'RE A BEING THAT CAME TO BE REGARDED AS "NOUNUKI-SAMA" AT SOME POINT—

AN ABNORMAL ENTITY.

AN ABNORMAL ENTITY...?

ZSH

ZSH

...IMMORTAL AND UNKNOWABLE THING...

...THAT EXISTS BEYOND HUMAN LOGIC.

SOME-THING FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

A REALITY-WARPING...

LIKE A GOD...

...A DEVIL...

...OR *HELL ITSELF.*

STUFF LIKE THAT.

WHEN HUMANS COME FACE-TO-FACE WITH SOMETHING INCOMPREHENSIBLE...

...THEY CAN'T MAKE SENSE OF IT WITHOUT FITTING IT INTO SOME PREEXISTING CONCEPT.

WHAT IS IT...

...THAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO...?

ZRSH

ｻﾘ...

I'M JUST AN ORDINARY GUY WITH NO POWERS WHATSOEVER.

DON'T EVEN HAVE THAT SWORD ON ME NOW.

NO NEED TO BE SO GUARDED.

I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK YOU TWO.

ZSHH

ZSHH

ZSHH

SKREEE...

SKREEE...

F.ZT-

YOU KNOW THE STORY OF THE INDOUS' ANCESTOR, RIGHT?

SKREEE...

YOU DON'T ?

WELL, THAT WAS PROBABLY THE FIRST TIME THAT THING YOU CALL "HIKARU" WAS TREATED AS "NOUNUKI-SAMA."

AND THAT'S WHY ***HIS WISH WAS GRANTED.***

I DO. HE WISHED FOR HIS WIFE TO BE BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE...

...!!

WHY DID A WISH GET GRANTED ONLY AT THAT TIME WHEN THE MASS DEATHS OCCURRED?

YOU PROBABLY ***MANIFESTED*** AROUND THAT TIME.

AND THE ANCESTOR WHO WITNESSED THAT EVENT BELIEVED YOU WERE "NOUNUKI-SAMA."

HUH?

SO WHEN DID I START LIVIN' ON THE MOUNTAIN?

THEY FALL DOWN HERE FROM THE OTHER SIDE WITHOUT ANYONE REALIZING IT...

...AND GRANT PEOPLE'S WISHES.

THE COMPANY I WORK FOR CALLS THEM "ILLEGITI-MATES."

AND THE ILLEGITIMATES WARP REALITY IN RESPONSE TO THEIR WISHES.

WHEN HUMANS ENCOUNTER THESE THINGS, THEY USUALLY MISTAKE THEM FOR SOMETHING ELSE AND APPEAL TO THEIR POWER.

ILLEGITI-MATES...?

WELL, WE STILL DON'T REALLY GET WHAT THEY ARE.

BUT THE TRUTH IS HARDLY THAT CONVENIENT.

WISHES...

UTILIZING SOMETHING BEYOND HUMAN UNDERSTANDING BRINGS TRAGEDY.

MOST WISHES DON'T COME OUT RIGHT.

THEY APPEAR AT ASTRONOM-ICALLY LOW RATES...

THERE ARE.

...BUT THE FIRST ONE WAS FOUND AROUND THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

TAP

TAP

SO THERE ARE OTHERS BESIDES HIKARU...?

IN ANY CASE...

THAT PAINTING...

...THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS "NOUNUKI-SAMA."

THE INDOUS' [illegible] PRETTY POINTLESS TOO.

[illegible]

BECAUSE YOU WERE [illegible] IN THE MOUNTAINS

MOUNTAIN [illegible]

THEN WHY'D YA SAY THERE'S NO POINT IN ME GOIN' BACK?

PLUS, WITH HOW WEAK YOU'VE GOTTEN...

...THERE'S NO WAY YOU CAN HANDLE THE MOB OF IMPURITIES UP THERE.

BECAUSE YOU'RE A SHADOW OF YOUR FORMER SELF.

YOU CAN'T GO BACK TO BEING "NOUNUKI-SAMA" AT THIS POINT.

YOU CUT OFF HIKARU'S HEAD...!!

WHAT ARE YOU PLANNING TO DO TO US...!!?

...UH, SO...WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR GOAL HERE?

I MEAN, HE'LL SELF-DESTRUCT SOON ENOUGH, RIGHT?

I WON'T LAY A FINGER ON YOU GUYS.

IF I CAN'T DEFEAT YOU, I'LL JUST HAVE YOU DESTROY YOURSELF.

AN UNTOUCHABLE, IMMORTAL BEING GAINING AN EGO AND THEN WEAKENING ITSELF IS REALLY SOMETHING TO BEHOLD.

HE'LL WHAT ...?

THE WAY I SEE IT, IT'S QUITE THE ACHIEVE-MENT.

I THINK I'M GONNA GO BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN

DESTROY HIMSELF? THAT CAN'T BE POSSIBLE

SO THIS WORKS OUT PRETTY WELL FOR ME.

MY GOAL IS TO PREVENT MY COMPANY FROM LOSING YOU

IN KUBITACHI, THERE'S A FOLKTALE CALLED "THE TALE OF THE FARMER'S HEAD," RIGHT?

HUH

BUT BEFORE THAT HAPPENS, THERE'S SOMETHING I'D LIKE YOU TO DO.

BUT THE
TRUTH ABOUT
THE HEAD
DISAPPEARING
IS PROBABLY
THIS.

IN REALITY IT'S
MORE LIKELY THAT
ONE FAMILY
KILLED THE OTHER
AND TOOK THEIR
BELONGINGS...

AS IT GOES,
ONE FAMILY'S
HEAD FALLS OFF
IN THE MOUNTAIN,
AND ANOTHER
GAINS A BOUNTY
OF DELICIOUS
FOODSTUFFS IN
EXCHANGE...

SO WE CARVE
[illegible]
'EM HERE.

WHEN THEY
MADE THEIR
OFFERINGS, THEM
HEADS WOULD
DISAPPEAR
RIGHT ON THE
SPOT.

[illegible]

WHY
[illegible]
NOUNUKI-
SAMA?

BECOME AN
[illegible]

BELIEF IN
[illegible]

BECAUSE
OF THIS
"DISAPPEARING
HEADS"
PHENOMENON.

WHY THE HEADS WERE DISAPPEARING.

I ACTUALLY LOOKED INTO IT, YOU KNOW.

EVEN IF THEIR WISHES WEREN'T BEING GRANTED, THAT MYSTERY BECAME THE BASIS FOR THE VILLAGERS' BELIEF IN A GOD.

IT'S BECAUSE THERE WAS A "HOLE."

AN INVISIBLE OPENING THAT THE VILLAGERS HAD BEEN OFFERING HEADS TO FOR YEARS.

THAT HOLE CONNECTS TO THE OTHER SIDE AND SENDS THEM HERE.

THAT'S PROBABLY THE REASON THIS AREA HAS HAD SO MANY IMPURITIES SINCE WAY BACK WHEN.

...BUT IT NEVER STOPPED GROWING.

YOU WERE LIMITING ITS EFFECT WHILE YOU WERE IN THE MOUNTAINS...

A HOLE ...

AN' IF WE CLOSE IT, WE CAN STOP ANYTHIN' BAD FROM HAPPENIN'?

YUP THAT'S THE IDEA.

WHETHER IT'S EVEN POSSIBLE IS ANOTHER STORY, THOUGH.

...IT COULD CAUSE A DISASTER.

AT THE RATE IT'S BEEN GOING...

I'M LOOKING TO CLOSE THAT HOLE SOMEHOW.

N...NO WAY.

...WILL YOU HELP ME CLOSE THAT HOLE?

SINCE YOU'RE GONNA SELF-DESTRUCT ANYWAY...

YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT "HIKARU"-KUN, HUH?

...

I CAN'T TRUST A WORD FROM SOMEONE LIKE YOU!

NOT AFTER WHAT YA DID TO HIKARU...

IS IT REALLY A GOOD IDEA FOR YOU TO KEEP CLINGING TO YOUR OLD FR.END?

BUT THAT THING'S JUST A MONSTER INSIDE HIKARU INDOU'S DEAD BODY.

CLENCH

WOULDN'T IT BE BETTER TO LET HIM GO?

HE HAS HIS OWN PERSONALITY AND WILL...

...SOME PHANTOM WHO SHOWED UP TO HELP ME GET OVER HIKARU'S DEATH.

...HE'S MORE THAN ...

IN THAT CASE, WHY GO THROUGH ALL THIS TROUBLE...

...FOR A COMPLETE STRANGER?

SUPPOSE HE'S HIS OWN "MAN," THEN.

Mr.

"Man"?

...AND ONE TROPICAL PARFAIT.

HERE IS YOUR ORDER OF THE HAWAIIAN TROPICAL PANCAKES ~WITH A TOUCH OF SEA BREEZE~...

MM

WE--

PLEASE
THINK IT
OVER.

I'M ONLY DOING WHAT I NEED TO DO.

RATTLE RATTLE

RATTLE RATTLE

KTHNK KTNK

KTHNK KTNK

KTHNK KTNK

KTHNK KTNK

WHAT EXACTLY IS "HIKARU"?

THEN WHAT'D HIKARU DIE FOR?

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS NOUNUKI-SAMA.

AND WHAT HAVE I BEEN DOING ALL THIS TIME...?

KKKKKKKK

I'M GLAD

ATSUSHI

TODAY WAS A BIG OL' MESS, HUH?

WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO TOMOR-ROW?

...AND YOU ALL LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER

THE MONSTER GOES AWAY...

THAT'D BE THE BEST ENDIN'.

I'M SO GLAD YA DON'T GOTTA GO BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN...

I'M A "MONSTER" TOO.

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN SUFFO-CATING.

I DON'T BELONG IN THIS SMALL WORLD.

I'VE BEEN HIDING WHO I AM THIS WHOLE TIME.

THAT'S WHY I WANT HIM TO BE SAVED.

BECAUSE I'LL BE SAVED TOO— AS LONG AS I'M WITH YOU.

AT THE END OF THE DAY, I'M JUST BEING SELFISH.

I KEPT BLAMING OTHERS AND ACTING RECKLESSLY, SAYING I WAS DOING THIS FOR HIKARU OR THE VILLAGE...

...BUT IN THE END, IT WAS ALL FOR MY OWN GOOD, HUH?

...JUST TO START TREATIN' HIM AS A PERSON ANYWAY...

THAT'S WHY HE TRIED TO GO BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN.

HIKARU AIN'T NOTHIN' LIKE ME!

ALWAYS BE A DANGER TO PEOPLE, THAT COMMITS MURDER...

I'M THE ONE WHO'S BEEN TREATING LIFE LIGHTLY.

MAYBE I DON'T ACTUALLY CARE ABOUT AM I STILL SEEING HIM AS "HIKARU."

EVEN IF OTHERS GET HURT, I STILL CARE ABOUT "HIKARU."

I DON'T WANT TO BE APART FROM HIM. I DON'T WANT TO BE ALONE. "HIKARU" IS "D ME.

DROOP

I'M AN EGOTISTICAL ASSHOLE...

HUH?

BUT EVERYTHING I DID...WAS JUST FOR MY OWN SELF-INTEREST...

I'VE BEEN SAYING THIS WAS FOR THE VILLAGE AND FOR YOU...

I SAID THIS BEFORE, BUT NO MATTER WHAT YA REALLY THINK...

...YOU'VE ALWAYS TREATED ME WELL.

HMM...

SELF-INTEREST IS THE ONLY THING THAT DRIVES ME...

...SO I DON'T GET WHAT YER SAYIN'.

WHAT IS IT THAT YA REALLY WANNA DO?

...

AND IF THAT'S YOU BEIN' SELFISH, THEN I LOVE IT. SEEIN' AS IT'S SAVED ME LOTS ALREADY.

...WANT TO GO SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY WITH YOU...

...AND TRAVEL AROUND, SEEIN' LOTS OF DIFFERENT SIGHTS...

I WANT TO BE FREE.

I...

SWEET!

ME TOO!

I WON'T BE ABLE TO TAKE IT.

BUT IF SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS TO KUBITACHI...

THE TRUTH IS, I MIGHT NOT CARE FOR IT MUCH AT ALL.

IT'S NOT LIKE I'M PARTICULARLY FOND OF THAT PLACE.

IT WAS AN IMPORTANT PLACE FOR THE REAL HIKARU TOO.

BUT MY FAMILY'S THERE.

AND SO ARE A BUNCH OF FOLKS I CARE ABOUT

EVEN THOUGH I HATE TO DO EXACTLY WHAT THAT GUY WANTED US TO...

SO WE'VE GOTTA CLOSE THAT HOLE.

...IS A TERRIBLE MISCON-CEPTION.

THIS WHOLE "SACRIFICING ONE THING TO SAVE ANOTHER" IDEA...

THAT FELLA...

WHO IS HE ANYWAY?

HE'S SHADY AN' ALL, BUT ODDLY ENOUGH, I DON'T FEEL ANY HOSTILITY FROM HIM...

I SEE.

GUESS IT AIN'T THAT SIMPLE.

I WAS CERTAIN YOSHIKI'D BE ON BOARD WITH IT TOO.

I THOUGHT EVERYTHIN' WOULD WORK OUT IF I WENT TO THE MOUNTAIN.

YER NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR THE REAL HIKARU!!!

HE ALWAYS WENT ALONG WITH MY SELFISH DESIRES.

...I SEE.

BUT...

THAT'S HOW IT IS...

KTHNK KTNK

A PLACE I'D WANNA GO, HUH...?

KTHNK KTNK

HEY. IS THERE ANYWHERE YOU'D WANNA GO?

KTHNK KTNK

A MEGA-HUGE...

...BAKED GOODS STORE...

...THERE'S A SPOT THIS ONE Y-TUBER WENT TO BEFORE...

IT'S IN TOKYO. THIS MEGA-HUGE...

... BAKED GOODS STORE.

GOT IT.

WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER...

...LET'S GO TO THAT BAKED GOODS STORE...

...THE TWO OF US.

Yoshiki-kun!?

Where are ya?

Can ya see what's goin' on in the sky?

Rie Kurebayashi

KURE-BAYASHI-SAN...

VRRR

VRRR

KTHNK KTNK

KTHNK KTNK

KTHNK KTNK

KTHNK KTNK KTNK

THE HECK... IS THAT?

CHAPTER 27 END

YUP, THEY SURE ARE.
YER FEET ARE SOAKED TOO, MISTER.

SORRY, KAYO-CHAN.

YEAH, I KNOW IT'S A BOTHER...

...BUT I APPRECIATE YA TAKIN' CARE OF MY DAUGHTER AND MY MOTHER-IN-LAW.

TICK TOCK

9 3 8 4 7 5 6

TICK TOCK

CHAPTER 28

THOSE BOYS SHOULD BE GETTIN' TO THE STATION ANY MINUTE NOW.

PING

Tsujinaka

HOW... YA SAY?

WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT ABOUT, ANYWAY?

THOSE BANDS WE SAW IN THE SKY EARLIER AIN'T THERE NO MORE.

"DIS-PERSING"?

Y'SEE, THE HOLE IN KUBITACHI...

...AIN'T ONE BIG HOLE. IT'S PROLLY BEEN SPLIT INTO SEVERAL OF 'EM.

IT MIGHT BE...

...DIS-PERSING.

THAT'S WHAT SEEMS TO BE GOIN' ON.

I RECKON THAT'S WHAT WE SAW FOR A BRIEF MOMENT.

AND A BUNCH OF IMPURITIES ARE BEING DRAWN IN FORMIN' A KIND OF PATHWAY.

THE HOLES ARE CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER

ENDED UP LIKE THAT SOONER OR LATER.

"SUDDEN". THEY'VE ALWAYS

WE JUST COULDN'T SEE 'EM.

WOULD A LOTTA PEOPLE DIE..?

THAT FELLA SAID SOMETHIN' ABOUT A "DISASTER"... BUT WHAT EXACTLY WOULD HAPPEN...?

AT THE RATE IT'S BEEN GOING, IT COULD CAUSE A DISASTER

I'M LOOKING TO CLOSE THAT HOLE SOMEHOW.

AND THERE WON'T BE AS MANY IMPURITIES, RIGHT?

SO IF WE CLOSE THOSE HOLES THE BANDS'LL GO AWAY

WE DON'T.. GOT MUCH TIME LEFT.

IF WE LEAVE THOSE HOLES ALONE, *IT'LL CAUSE SOMETHIN'*— WE CAN BE SURE OF THAT.

THANK YOU.

YOU SURE KNOW A LOT, KUREBAYASHI-SAN...

VROOOOM

RIGHT NOW, THE WHOLE TOWN'S DISTORTED.

IF WE CLOSE THE HOLES, THINGS SHOULD GO BACK TO NORMAL.

YEAH...

RTNK

HUH. SO WHY'D THE HOLES SPLIT UP?

...BUT IF THEY DIDN'T, THINGS WOULDA GONE BAD MUCH QUICKER...

THAT, I CAN'T RIGHTLY SAY...

. .WELL, TRUTH IS, I'VE BEEN DOIN' SOME RESEARCH BEHIND THE SCENES!

'BOUT LOTSA THINGS. AH-HA-HA!

JUDGIN' FROM THE LOOK OF THOSE BANDS...

THE IMPURITIES SPREAD OUT FROM THE MAIN HOLE IN KUBITACHI TO THREE OTHER LOCATIONS.

THE DISPERSAL'S ACTUALLY THE REASON THINGS'VE HELD UP FOR SO LONG.

THERE'RE PROLLY ANOTHER THREE HOLES BESIDES THE ONE HERE.

ONE OUT BY ASHIDORI, ONE THE WAY OF UDEKARI, AND ONE SOMEWHERE IN KIBOGAYAMA.

THAT'S GOTTA BE WHY THE MAIN OPENING IN KUBITACHI GREW SO SLOWLY.

BECAUSE IT WAS DISPERSED INTO THREE OTHER ONES.

HEADS WERE OFFERED UP TO THE HOLE IN KUBITACHI...

...AND THE REST OF THE CORPSE FROM THE NECK DOWN...

I SEE.

RIGHT?

"HAD TO BE CHOPPED UP AN' BURIED AS FAR AWAY AS POSSIBLE."

BEFORE, Y'ALL WERE SAYIN'...

WELL, I DUNNO IF THEY HAD A CLUE IT EXISTED, BUT..

. THEY ENDED UP DOIN' WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE.

SO THEY DID THAT TO THIN OUT THE MAIN HOLE...?

MAYBE IT'S LIKE ONE OF THOSE RITUAL SUBSTITUTION DOLLS...

YEAH

...THAT THE LANDSCAPE IN THIS REGION LOOKS LIKE A PERSON, RIGHT?

THAT COULD'VE BEEN THEIR AIM.

...AND THE IDEA WAS TO HAVE THE LAND TAKE ON SINS AND IMPURITIES

GOOD POINT.

THE ABANDONED VILLAGES LIKE UDEIRI AND THE AREA SOUTH OF KIBOGAYAMA...

DON'T HAVE THEM, RIGHT?

BUT THEN, WHY ONLY THREE HOLES?

THAT'S WHY THEY DIVIDED THE VILLAGE...? WHOA.

HMM

SO IN THE END.

...SO EVEN IF THERE WERE HOLES, I DON'T THINK THERE'D BE IMPURITIES THERE...

I WONDER WHY

ACTUALLY, IMPURITIES USUALLY SHOW UP NEAR PLACES OF HUMAN ACTIVITY...

EASY PEASY!

...WE JUS' GOTTA FIGURE OUT A WAY TO CLOSE FOUR HOLES, RIGHT!!?

YA DIDN'T THINK TO ASK HIM HOW YER S'POSED TO CLOSE 'EM?

NO WONDER OUR MYSTERY MAN WANTED A HAND FROM Y'ALL.

AND WHY'RE THERE FOUR OF 'EM!?

URRGH!

NOPE! NOOOPE! THERE'S NO FREAKIN' WAY WE CAN DO THAT!

THE BANDS WENT AWAY TOO...

IF ONLY WE COULD ASK "HICHI-SAN" 'BOUT IT.

I MEAN, WHERE EVEN ARE THEY IN THE FIRST PLACE!?

I-I DIDN'T WANNA DO IT, SO I TURNED 'IM DOWN...

"HICHI-SAN"...

SWAP

GAH!

HOT!

ITS
MUCH...

THE THING
THAT SHOULDA
BEEN IN THE
SHRINE—

"HICHI-
SAN"!

CAN
THAT'S

SHE WAS SO WORRIED FOR HER DESCENDANTS THAT SHE TURNED HERSELF INTO A CURSED OBJECT.

SHE MUST'VE BEEN PRETTY DEVOTED TO HER FAMILY.

THAT'S NOT SOMETHING JUST ANYONE CAN DO.

THIS USED TO BE HICHI-SAN'S HEAD...

...RIGHT?

SO HERS DIDN'T DISAPPEAR.

...BUT HICHI-SAN'S WAS THE ONLY ONE OFFERED UP TO *ME*.

OTHER PEOPLE'S HEADS GOT SWALLOWED INTO THE HOLE AND VANISHED...

I WONDER WHY

OH

BUT...

HUH?

WAIT, THEN WHY'RE *THE REST OF THE BONES* OF THE SACRIFICED PEOPLE STILL AROUND?

LOTS OF 'EM WERE FOUND NEAR THE TUNNEL AN' OTHER PLACES...

OH YEAH... THEN AFTER WE SHOULD START BY LOOKING AROUND THOSE PLACES...

LIKE THE ARMS AN' LEGS AN' STUFF!

...THE LOCATIONS OF THE HOLES MUST BE THE SPOTS WHERE THE BONES SHOWED UP, RIGHT?

UH-HUH! I WAS JUS' THINKIN' THE SAME THING...

KLUNK

GROK GROK GROK

GROK GROK GROK

GROK GROK

MATSU PHARMACY

SOUNDS LIKE SHE FORGOT SHE RAN OUTTA TOILET PAPER.

AND THE STORES'RE ABOUT TO CLOSE.

WHY'D KUREBAYASHI-SAN STOP BY A PHARMACY?

KRSH

SO, YOSHIKI ...

...ARE YA SCARED OF ME?

HMM ?

HA HA!

YOU REALLY OUGHTTA BE MORE AFRAID .!

I CAN'T TELL.

NOT SURE IF IT'S FEAR OR WHAT...

THERE'S A CHANCE I MIGHT ATTACK YA AGAIN.

SINCE I'M NOT GOIN' BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN

SHE'LL PROTECT YER SOUL FROM IMPURITIES

AND FROM ME TOO, OF COURSE.

THAT'S WHY...

...YOU SHOULD BE THE ONE TO KEEP HICHI-SAN!

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO YOU GETTIN' "MIXED"...

...NOT EVEN HICHI-SAN CAN STOP THAT.

OH YEAH...?

NO MATTER WHAT, HE'S STILL A DANGEROUS BEING.

CLOSING THE HOLES WON'T ERASE THE FACT THAT HIKARU HAS KILLED PEOPLE.

EVEN IF IT'S UNFORGIVABLE TO DO SO.

BUT DESPITE THAT... I WANT TO CONTINUE DOWN THIS PATH.

EVEN IF SOMETHING IN ME BREAKS...

I'M NOT DOING THIS FOR ANYONE ELSE — I'M DOING IT FOR MYSELF.

THAT'LL BE SEVEN HUNDRED YEN

EEE?

THE HUGE NUMBER OF

MUMBLE

AIN'T WHAT I'M THINKIN', DOIN' ALL THIS, THOUGH.

"THIS TIME I WANNA KEEP HIM SAFE"..

HE MUST HATE ME.

OH, NO! JUST TALKIN' TO MYSELF! GOODNESS ME! AH-HA-HA-HA-HA!

?

GROK GROK GROK

EVERYONE'S POSTIN' ON THEIR SOCIALS SINCE IT'S SUMMER BREAK.

GROK GROK GROK

GROK GROK

ASAKO'S ALREADY DONE WITH HER HOMEWORK.

YUUKI'S MAKIN' ICE POPS WITH HER LITTLE SISTERS.

HUH ...?

ZZZZZ

CHAPTER 28 END

HE'S NOT A FAN OF SWEETS,
BUT HE LIKES SOFT DRINKS
AND ICE CREAM

HE CAN'T STAND WHIPPED
CREAM AND CHOCOLATE

...believe in ghosts?
Hey ...
...do y'all ...

CHAPTER 29

Uh, well ...
Yeah
Sorry for the weird post.
But it's just ...

THIS ABOUT THAT PHOTO ? THE ONE YA PUT UP ON YER SOCIALS?

Plus, more of 'em crop up every day.

Them things're terrifyin' as hell, but truth is...

...there've been legs showin' up at my place every night.

First time I saw 'em, I freaked out so hard I tripped an' hurt myself.

DaMMiiit!

...I'm more annoyed than scared at this point!

Then, as if breakin' my arm wasn't enough already...

...KNOW ANYTHIN' ABOUT THAT?

HMM...

I ain't got no sixth sense. Never "seen" anythin' before this either — not even once.

So why this outta nowhere !?

...now I've got this weird rash on my leg!

An' no one can tell me what it is!

HEY, MAKI...

HMM... NAH, DON'T SWEAT IT...

Huh? Nope, never. Why!?

...YOU GOT ANY PETS? OR DIDJA USED TO?

I'll call ya if anythin' else happens!

See ya!

Ah, dang it! Gotta go.

Yuu-taaa !! What time d'you think it is!?

HRMMM... WHY PETS?

IT'S JUST... SOMETHIN' WAS *CLINGIN'* TO MAKI...

ONE OF THE HOLES IS S'POSED TO BE THERE TOO, RIGHT?

I RECKON MAKI'S SITUATION'S RELATED IN SOME WAY.

IN ANY CASE, LET'S GO TO ASHIDORI.

THAT'S WHERE MAKI LIVES, AIN'T IT?

FEELS LIKE WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TURN A BLIND EYE.

YEAH.

I'M WORRIED ABOUT HIM.

TMP
TMP

I STILL NEED TO THANK YOUR... CLASSMATE'S MOM? FOR GIVING YOU A RIDE YESTERDAY...

AND ARE YOU TRYING TO SNEAK OUT AGAIN...!? AT LEAST TELL ME WHERE YOU'RE GOING...

WAIT A MINUTE! YOSHIKI!

GEEZ, KID...

I'M SLEEPIN' OVER AT MAKI'S PLACE.

ZSHH

...AN' THE OLD IMPURITIES OF PEOPLE WHO GOT OFFERED UP ARE COMIN' OUT.

MAYBE IT'S 'COS THE HOLE'S REALLY STARTIN' TO COME OPEN...

GHOST LEGS, HUH? NOW THAT YA MENTION IT, I'VE NEVER REALLY SEEN ANYTHIN' LIKE THAT IN TOWN.

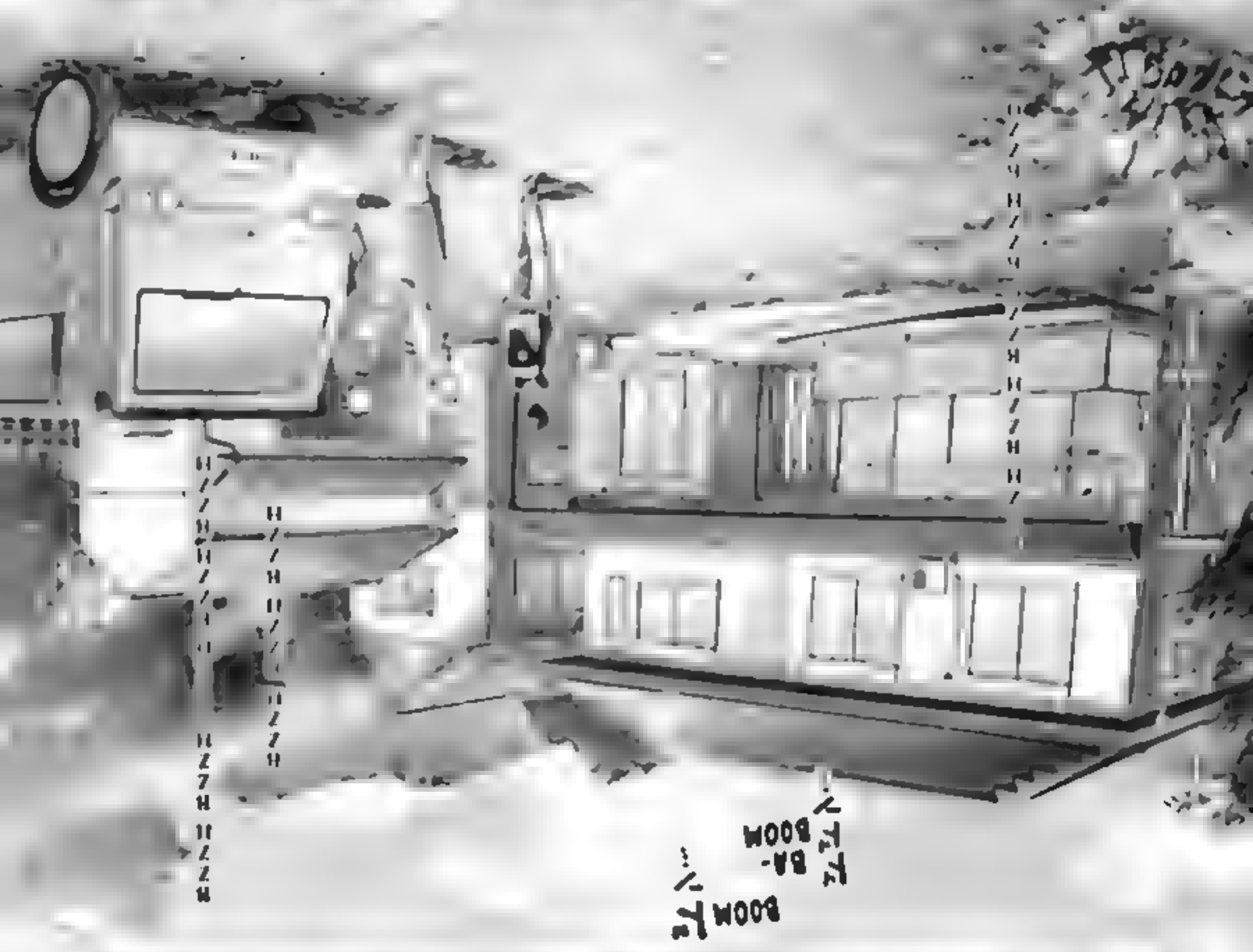
WELL, LET'S HEAD OVER AN' SEE.

WE'VE GOTTA INVESTIGATE THE HOLE ANYWAY.

YA SCARED?

I'M NOT SURE I'M REALLY READY FOR THIS...

BOOM
BOOM
BOOM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BOOM
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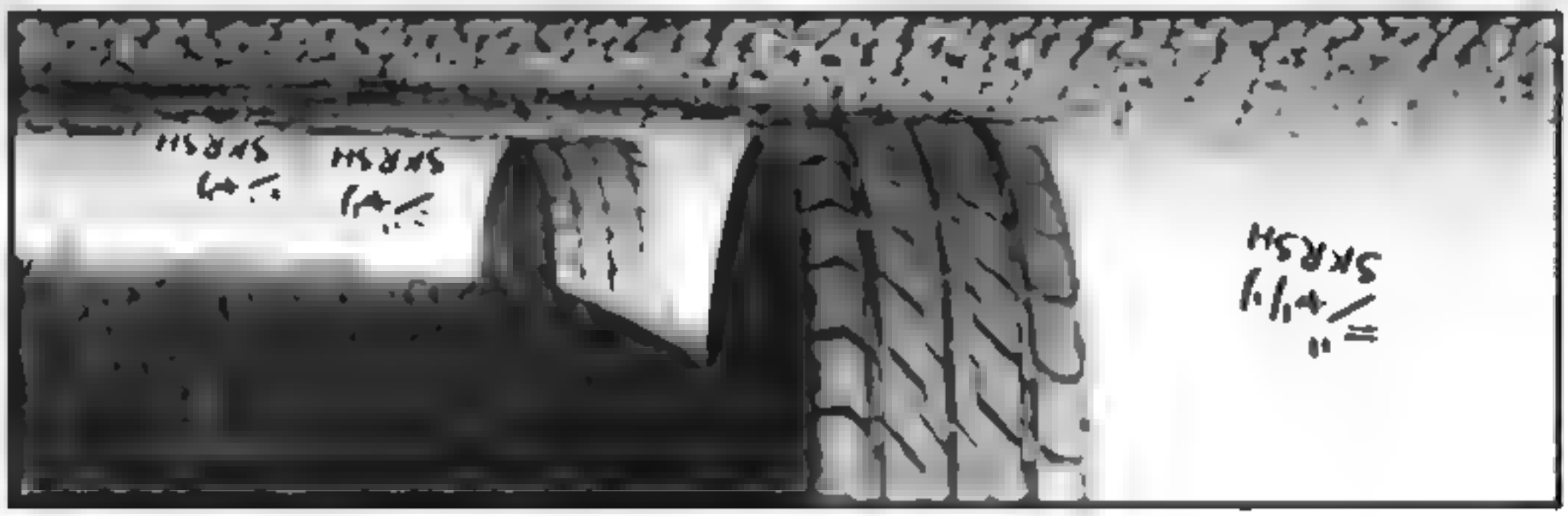
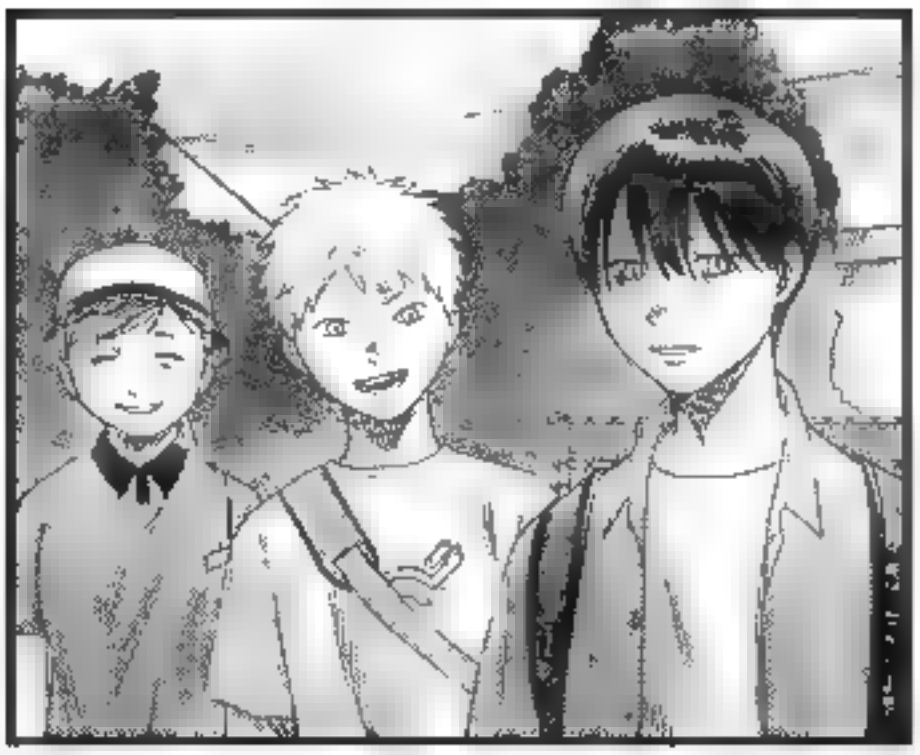

SKRSH
SKRSH
SKRSH

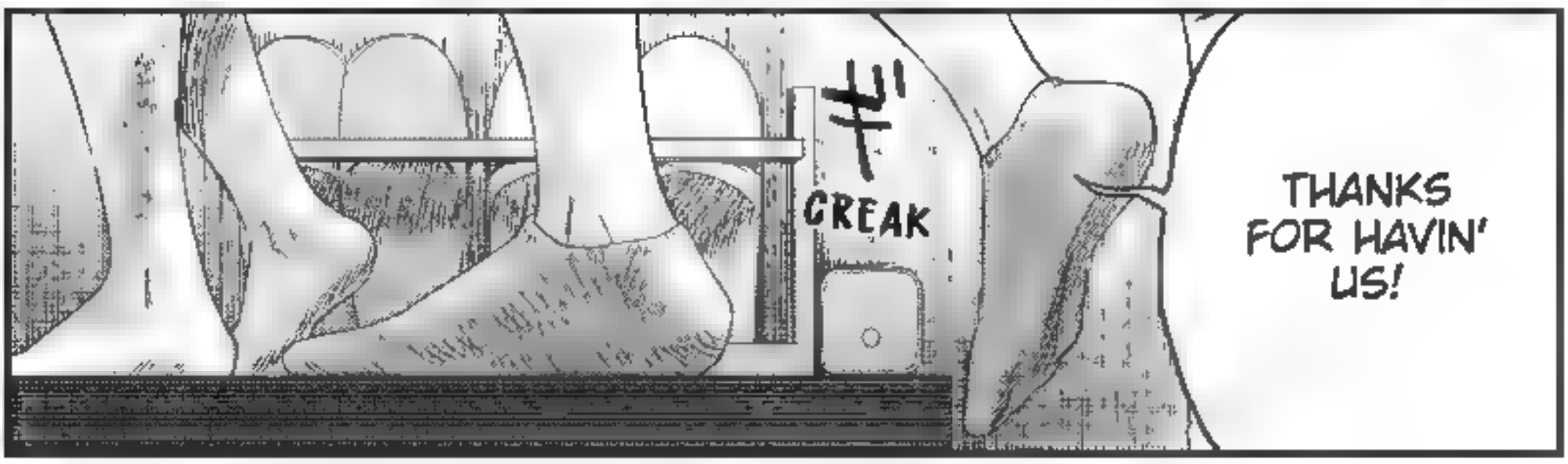


...

GCHAK
OHH, Y'ALL CAME!
HIKARU!
AN'...

...
YOSHIKI!
THAT AIN'T FUNNY.
OH, Y'KNOW— WENT BLANK FOR A SEC. HA-HA!
WHY'D THAT TAKE SO LONG?

...
WHAT?


CREAK
THANKS FOR HAVIN' US!

THEY'RE OUT PREPARIN' FOR THE FESTIVAL TODAY.

...BY THE WAY...

UM...

IS YER FAMILY AROUND? SHOULD WE SAY HELLO...?

OH, RIGHT

AH HA HA!

SORRY, MA'AM, BUT WHO ARE YOU, EXACTLY?

WELL... I'M JUST AN ORDINARY OUSEWIFE HO MET SE KIDS —

SHE'S A MEDIUM! STRONGEST ONE OUT THERE!

FOR REAL! SHE'S INSANE!

NEVER BEEN ON TV, NO.

THAT'S A FREAKIN' MASSIVE RELIEF!!!

ARE YA ON TV AN' STUFF!?

WHAA!?

OH WOW.

SO THERE'S A FESTIVAL TODAY?

THOUGH I'VE GOT OTHER THINGS TO WORRY 'BOUT RIGHT NOW!

NEVER HEARD OF THE ***HOUKO FESTIVAL***? IT'S PRETTY FAMOUS.

THMP

THMP

GCHAK

DON'T SEE ANYTHIN' TOO WEIRD SO FAR

WHAT IS IT?

OH!
CRAP!
ZSH

BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH

WHAT'S THIS SHRINE FOR? INARI OR SOMETHIN'?

MM, NAW.

BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH

DANG. I PLUMB FORGOT TO CLEAN IT! THAT THING'S NAAASTY!

MY BIG BRO'S GONNA BE SO MAD...

IT'S FOR A SEROW.

THIS STORY GOES BACK TO MY GREAT-GRANDPA —

A SEROW... A JAPANESE SEROW? THE PROTECTED SPECIES?

SOME POINT, HE STARTED FEELIN' LIKE SOMETHIN' WAS FOLLOWIN' HIM EVERY TIME HE ENTERED THE MOUNTAINS.

SEEIN' THAT,

WHENEVER HE LOOKED AROUND, TRYIN' TO FIGURE OUT THE CAUSE, HE ALWAYS FOUND TRACKS OF SOMEONE'S BARE FEET.

ONE DAY,

SO MY GREAT-GRANDPA FREED IT

THAT WAS RIGHT WHEN THE WILDLIFE PROTECTION ACT HAD GONE INTO EFFECT, BANNIN' FOLKS FROM HUNTIN' SERUM...

AFTER THAT, THE PRESENCE THAT'D BEEN FOLLOWIN' HIM AROUND SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED...

...AN' HE STARTED FINDIN' SERUM MOOF-PRINTS BEHIND HIM INSTEAD

MY BIG BRO WAS REAL DILIGENT ABOUT TAKIN' CARE OF IT, BUT HE ENDED UP MOVIN' TO TOKYO.

I ONLY LEFT IT ALONE A SHORT WHILE, BUT LOOKS LIKE IT'S GOTTEN KINDA MESSY... HEH-HEH!

SO MY GREAT-GRANDPA BUILT THIS SHRINE...

...TO MAKE THE SEROW HIS GUARDIAN SPIRIT... OR SO THE STORY GOES.

I'LL GRAB SOME CLEANIN' SUPPLIES RIGHT QUICK!!

YA THINK SO!?

SO THE ANIMAL YOU'VE BEEN TALKIN' 'BOUT SINCE YESTERDAY...

Y'KNOW ...

...YA REALLY OUGHTTA KEEP THIS THING CLEANED.

I NOTICED IT AIN'T BEEN AROUND LATELY, BUT NOW I KNOW WHY.

IT'S THE "ANIMAL IMPURITY" THAT'S BEEN STUCK ON MAKI SINCE THE START.

HUH? WHADDAYA MEAN?

THERE WAS AN IMPURITY STUCK ON 'IM?

THAT SEROW FROM THE STORY WE JUST HEARD?

AHH, THAT MAKES SENSE.

IMPURITIES CAN BECOME GUARDIAN SPIRITS LIKE THAT SOMETIMES.

'MEMBER THAT TIME BACK ON THE FOREST PATH?

YEAH.

IT'S JUST AN IMPURITY OF A SEROW...

...BUT ENSHRININ' IT UPGRADED ITS STATUS.

AH!

SO THAT WAS...

YEP, A GUARDIAN SPIRIT.

SINCE WE GOT ATTACKED AS SOON AS MAKI WASN'T AROUND. HA-HA!

IT WAS PROLLY KEEPIN' US FROM LOOKIN' AT THAT "LESS-THAN SIGN" MONSTER.

IT'S LIKE MY EYES CAN'T MOVE AWAY FROM THE PATH IN FRONT OF ME.

I CAN'T LOOK INTO THE FOREST.

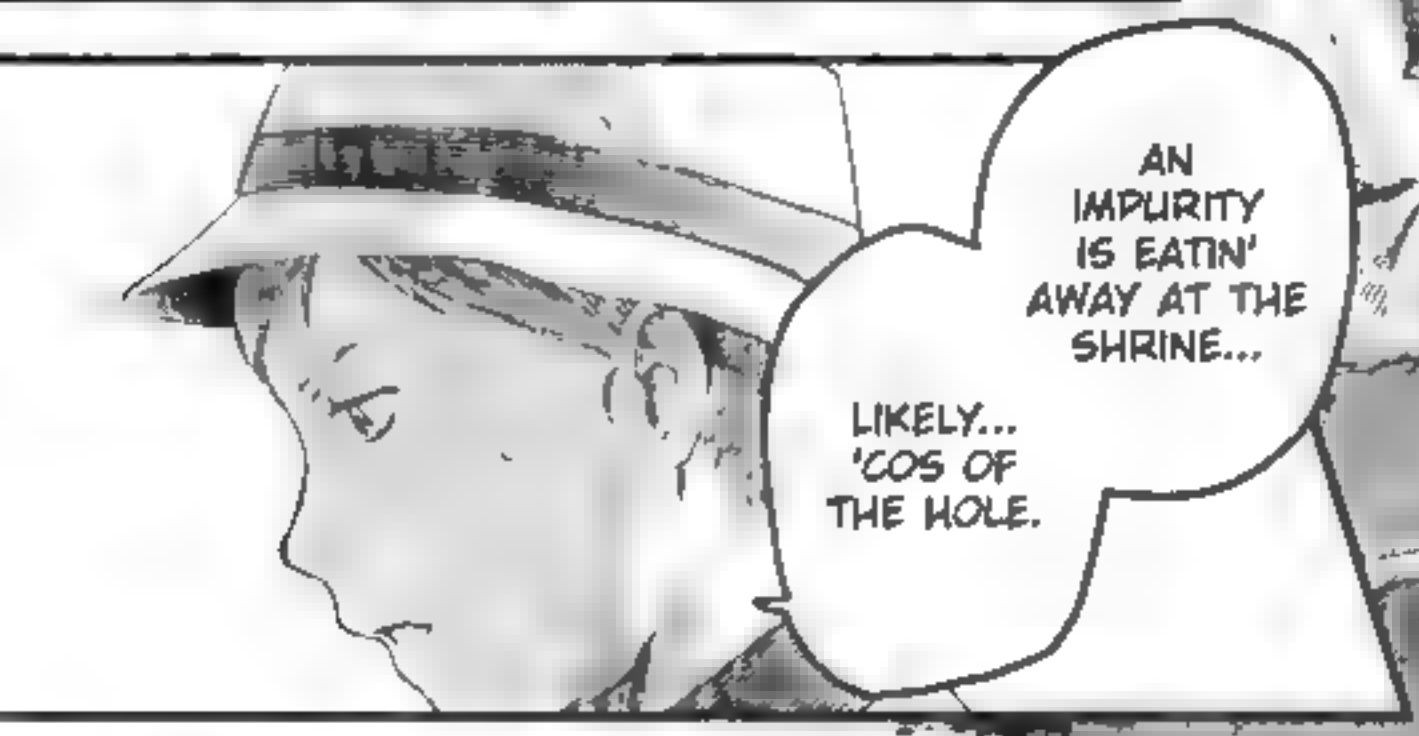
HMM...

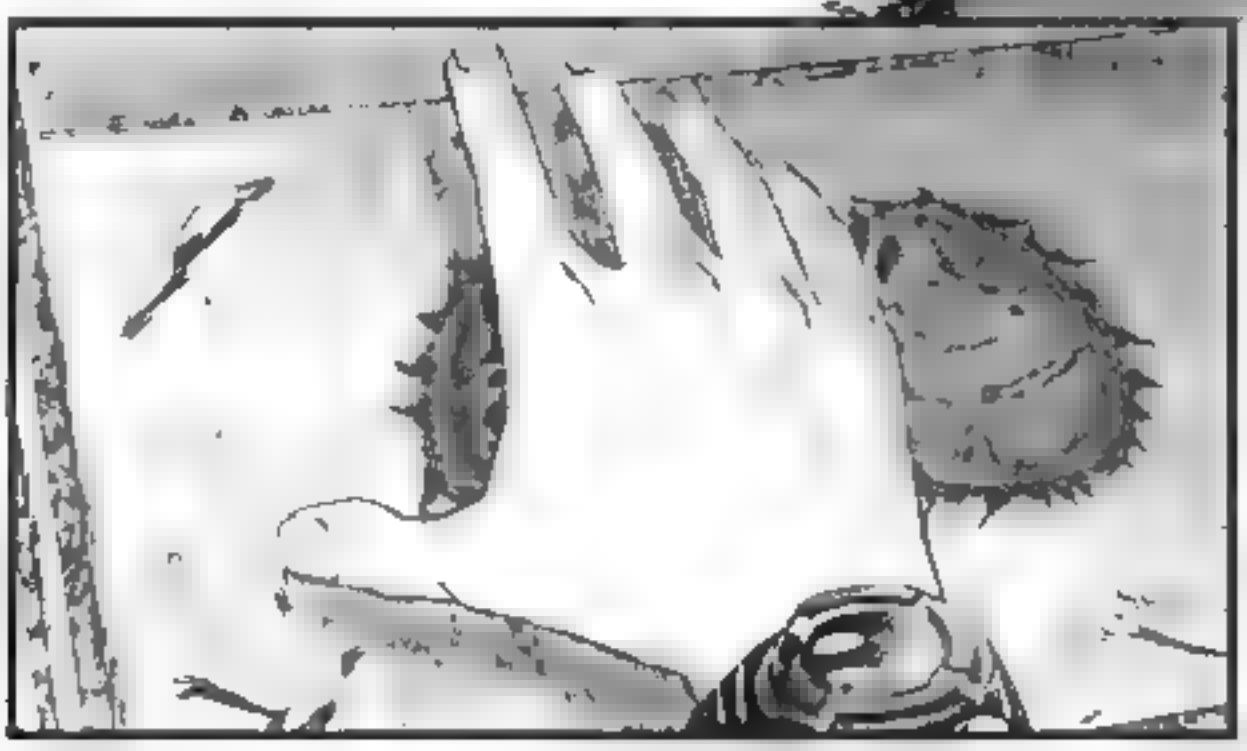
IT'S MORE THAN THAT...

SO NOW MAKI'S GUARDIAN SPIRIT DISAPPEARED AN' THE "LEGS" ARE AFTER 'IM—ALL 'COS HE WAS LAZY ABOUT CLEANIN' THE SHRINE...?

KLAK KLAK

WHX!!
KRWWRO!!


AN IMPURITY IS EATIN' AWAY AT THE SHRINE...
LIKELY... 'COS OF THE HOLE.



AH, YEAH, YER RIGHT.
I'LL GET RID OF IT!

SNAP

OW, OW, OW!

YEEEAH!

YER NOSE AIN'T BLEEDIN'

THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN EVERY TIME.

IT'S GONE, RIGHT?

WHAT'D YOU DO...

...JUS' NOW?

?

YEAH.

I PUT IT INSIDE ME.

THAT WAY WE'VE GOT NOTHIN' TO WORRY 'BOUT, RIGHT?

COULDN'T TELL YA WHERE THE IMPURITIES INSIDE ME END UP, THOUGH.

WELL, I GUESS IT'S LIKE, FOR ME, THIS IS...

EASILY ...?

...I SEE.

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD HANDLE THOSE THINGS SO EASILY.

SOULS AN' IMPURI-TIES...

I WANT TO TAKE IN SOULS.

IMPURITIES WERE SOLLS AT ONE POINT TOO.

AN' WHEN I ABSORB 'EM, WELL...

...IN-STINCT.

PROLLY SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT.

...IT FEELS GOOD, Y'KNOW!? HA-HA!

HA HA HA!

...

SEXUAL DESIRE.

HUNGER.

THE FEAR OF DEATH.

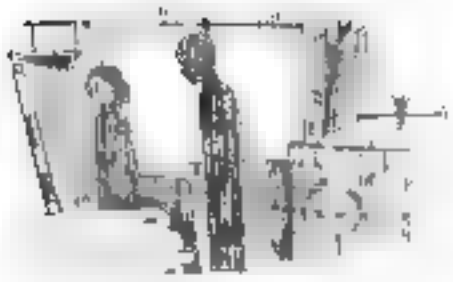
THOSE TYPES OF HUMAN INSTINCTS ...

...ARE THINGS I *DON'T HAVE*, SO I DON'T REALLY GET 'EM...

...BUT I HAVE MY OWN, DIFFERENT DESIRES.

MINCED MEAT CUTLET

TASTY, SO I'LL EAT IT



TWO PEOPLE ALONE IN THE GYM

FEELS KINDA SCANDALOUS

...AN' I LIKE FOOD 'COS IT TASTES GOOD, BUT THE FEELIN' OF HUNGER ITSELF AIN'T A BIG DEAL FOR ME.

LIKE, I KNOW WHEN SOMETHIN'S SUPPOSED TO BE SEXY...

I MEAN, I DO UNDERSTAND SOME OF IT, Y'KNOW?

NAH...

IT'S JUST...

...I DON'T ACTUALLY KNOW YA THAT WELL...

...AN' IT AIN'T FAIR IF YER THE ONLY ONE LEARNIN' 'BOUT US...

HUH?

YA ALMOST NEVER ASK ME ANYTHIN' LIKE THAT...

CRACKLE

SURE, EVERYONE HAS A SPARK...

...BUT HOW BRIGHTLY IT BURNS DEPENDS ON THE PERSON...

CRACKLE

SOULS ...

...ARE KINDA LIKE FIRE.

CRACKLE

...AN' BEIN' NEAR A LARGE FIRE CAN AFFECT THE ONES AROUND IT.

AN' THOSE THINGS ARE CONSTANTLY VISIBLE TO YOU?

IMPURITIES ARE DRAWN TO SOULS IN THE SAME WAY.

WHEN YOU'RE COLD, YOU WANNA BASK IN A FIRE'S WARMTH, RIGHT?

YEAH... ACTUALLY, SOULS ARE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE REST.

SAY THE BODY IS LIKE A BOAT THAT CARRIES YOUR SOUL AROUND.

THEN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BEIN' DEAD OR ALIVE...

IS WHETHER OR NOT YER IN THE BOAT, GET IT?

HUH?

YEAH.

IN OTHER WORDS, IF *THE BODY CHANGES BUT THE SOUL IS THE SAME—*

WOULD THEY STILL BE THE SAME PERSON TO YA?

IN THAT CASE...

...IF YOU MOVE THE SOUL TO A DIFFERENT BOAT—

WHETHER THEY'RE HUMAN...

...OR AN ELEPHANT, OR WHAT.

A SOUL IS THE ESSENCE OF A PERSON.

I'M SURE SOMEONE WITH THE SAME SOUL AS YOU WOULD DO THE SAME THINGS YOU DO.

YOSHIKI!!!

HA-HA...
HA...

I DON'T GET IT.

HRRMM...

HA HA HA HA!

.....

WAIT...BUT...

...IF HE WERE AN ELEPHANT, WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO EAT ICE CREAM TOGETHER.

IN THAT CASE, I... UHH...

HEEEY!

HAAH...

WHOA!

CRASH

OW!

BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH

I'M GONNA CLEAN UP NOW, SO GIMME A HAND!

CLUNK

DANG IT!

MY LEEEG!

OH MY!!

ARE YOU OKAY? I'LL TAKE THOSE SUPPLIES..

OH!

THAT RASH.

HUH —?

WHAT!!?

CHECK IT OUT.

IT'S ALL BETTER!

DROP

WHAT ABOUT IT!?

HOT DAA-AAA-AANG!

WHA —?

KUREBAYASHI-SAN SENT SOME PSYCHIC ENERGY TO IT.

DOESN T WORK ON EVERYTHIN, THOUGH

PRETTY COOL AIN T IT ?

HOW D YA DO THAT?

IF IT'S AN INJURY CAUSED BY IMPURITIES, I CAN HEAL IT

BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH

WHOA, LOOK HOW CLEAN IT GOT...

BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH

YER BROTHER'S REALLY INTO THIS STUFF, HUH?

YEAH, I ALREADY TOLD YA...

YA REALLY THINK THIS'LL STOP THOSE LEGS FROM SHOWIN' UP?

WELL... AT THE VERY LEAST, MY BRO WON'T BE MAD AT ME...

...HE GOES WILD FOR ALL THINGS OCCULT!

THAT'S MY BIG BRO FOR YA.

...MY FRIEND YOSHIKI, WHO'S BIG ON PARANORMAL STUFF, CAME OVER—

SO YEAH...

THAT'S THE STORY I'M GOIN' WITH.

THAT TRUE?

...AN' HE SAYS HE'S GOT A BUNCHA QUESTIONS FOR YA— YEAH...

I HEAR THEY LOOK NOTHIN' ALIKE.

NOPE.

SOMETHIN' ABOUT A "HOLE"...

YA EVER SEEN MAKI'S BROTHER BEFORE?

Y'all have pretty good timing! Ha-ha!

About the "hole" in Ashidori?

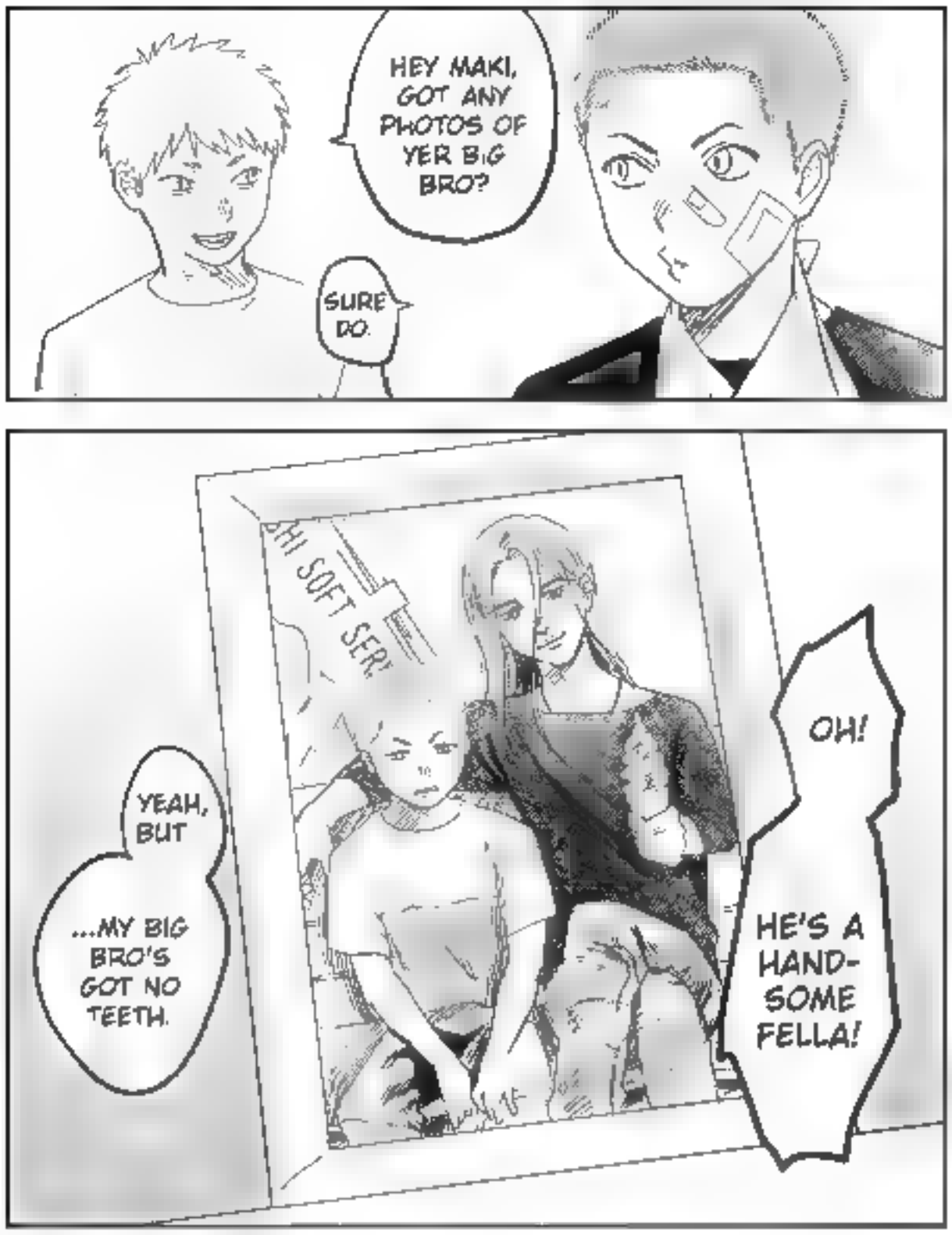
GOOD TIMING?

Y'know the "Houko Festival" they hold in Ashidori?

Way back, they used to call it the "hole patching."

CHAPTER 29 END

'COS I CAN'T GO TO PRAC- T CE·
YER HA R'S GROWN OUT
SCRUFF


HEY MAKI, GOT ANY PHOTOS OF YER BIG BRO?
SURE DO.
OH!
HE'S A HAND-SOME FELLA!
YEAH, BUT
...MY BIG BRO'S GOT NO TEETH.

MURMUR

TATAK

BOOM BOOM BOOM

BOOM

WHOOA!

MURMUR

MRMR

CHAPTER 30

BABOOM

COURSE NOT! DON'T GO LUMPIN' US IN WITH THAT PODUNK VILLAGE!

SURE IS CROWDED HERE...YA'D NEVER SEE THIS MANY FOLKS IN KUBITACHI.

BOTH PLACES'RE PRETTY COUNTRY, THOUGH.

MRMR

BOOM

BABOOM

YER EATIN' THAT LIKE IT'S A HUNK OF MEAT

THE HOUKO FESTIVAL ...

ASHIDORI

BOOM

BOOM

"HOLE PATCHING"?

...the Houko Festival's a pretty strange one, y'know?

Ankle

First off, as far as festivals go...

Once that's done, the dolls are taken to a cave on the outskirts of the village.

They dress up these dolls called "houko" with needles and thread and put 'em on display...

...but there ain't nobody who really knows what kinda tradition it was.

Seems like it began 'round the time Ashidori split off an' became its own village, though...

The festival took on its current form durin' the arrival of missionaries in the mid-1700s.

'Fore that, it was called the "hole patching"...

ASHIDORI

HOUKO

A CAVE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE VILLAGE...?

.....!!

HE'S TALKIN' 'BOUT ASHIZUKA CAVE.

Y'ALL KNOW IT, RIGHT? THE PLACE THEY FOUND ALL THEM BONES.

IT'S A TOURIST SPOT...

...SO ANYONE CAN GO IN THERE NOW.

HMM ...?

THE LOCATIONS OF THE HOLES MUST BE THE SPOTS WHERE THE BONES SHOWED UP, RIGHT!?

DID THEY HAVE 'EM IN THE ABANDONED VILLAGES TOO?

...?

There're also similar traditions in places like Kibogayama and Udekari... or so I've heard.

But those're just rumors.

...Hm? Did I hear a lady's voice just now? Ha-ha!

But there's almost no info on those places. Ha-ha! Like, it's actually kinda bizarre.

Abandoned villages...? Oh, huh, I wonder.

NOW THAT YA MENTION IT...I DUNNO MUCH ABOUT 'EM EITHER—AND I'VE LIVED HERE MY WHOLE LIFE.

KNEEEN

WHAT!? HUUUUUH!!? ARE Y'ALL FOR REAL RIGHT NOW!??

.....

OH, HER NAME'S KUREBAYASHI-SAN. SHE'S THE STRONGEST MEDIUM AROUND.

I can't believe it! Ya really exist! Whoo-hoo!

IT'S ALL JUST RUMORS...

OH, I AIN'T THAT SPECIAL...

YOU KNOW HER, BRO!?

How do ya go about exorcisin' spirits!?

Wait, can I ask ya some-thin'!?

Know her!? She's super-famous in the area! Ha-ha! A straight-up legend! Ha-ha-ha!

HUH? THAT AIN'T EXACTLY MY EXPERTISE, BUT... HMM...
I GUESS.. SOMETIMES I KINDA... GIVE 'EM A SLAP.
"HEY NOW!"
AN EXOR-SLAP!!??
RUSTLE RUSTLE CLICK CLICK SKRIT SKRIT SKRIT
Ah, dang! My plane's about to leave.
And Yuuta, pick which cursed object ya want as yer souvenir from Thailand already!
BLIP
...SORRY, Y'ALL. MY BROTHER'S A REAL FREAK.

TA TA K

Rhhh, looking north to the skies aoover Mount Tenban! Yoi, yoi! ♪

BA BOOM

BOOM

YANK

BOOM

BA BOOM

MURMUR MURMUR MURMUR

HEY!

WHAT'S THAT GLOWIN' DRINK OVER THERE!!?

BOOM

...SO Y'ALL SEE IF YOU CAN FIND ANY CLUES FROM CHECKIN' OUT THE FESTIVAL.

I'LL GO TAKE A LOOK AT THAT ASHIZUKA CAVE...

BA BOOM

C'MON. DON'T FORGET WHAT WE'RE HERE FOR.

BOOM

WHOA!
PUFF

HEY NOW" RUUNA"
OH
AH
WAIT

HERE

THANK YOU.

SORRY 'BOUT THAT!

BOOM

BOOM BOOM

YOU WORKED SO HARD TO MAKE THAT, DIDN'T YA?

BABOOM

TATAK

BABOOM

SURE WAS.

BET SHE MADE IT AT THE HANDICRAFT TENT OVER THERE.

OH!? JUST WHAT YA'D EXPECT FROM A GUY WITH A LITTLE SISTER.

...WAS THAT DOLL JUST NOW A "HOUKO"?

HMM... HOW TO EXPLAIN... WELL, IT'S WRITTEN WITH THE KANJI FOR "CRAWL" AND "CHILD"...

...AN' I GUESS IT'S SOME SORTA CHARM TO PROTECT KIDS FROM BAD LUCK.

I'VE BEEN WONDERIN' FOR A WHILE NOW, BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS A "HOUKO"?

THEY WERE USED BY FOLKS PRAYIN' FOR THE GOOD HEALTH OF THEIR CHILDREN! WELL, PROLLY ANYWAY.

EVEN BEFORE THE VILLAGE SPLIT UP, BACK WHEN "UNUKI-SAN" WAS STILL A THING...

FOLKS'VE BEEN MAKIN' 'EM IN ASHIDORI SINCE AGES AGO...

B

BABOOM

BOOM

BOOM

OH, SEE? THERE'S THE DISPLAY FOR 'EM RIGHT OVER THERE.

BOOM BOOM

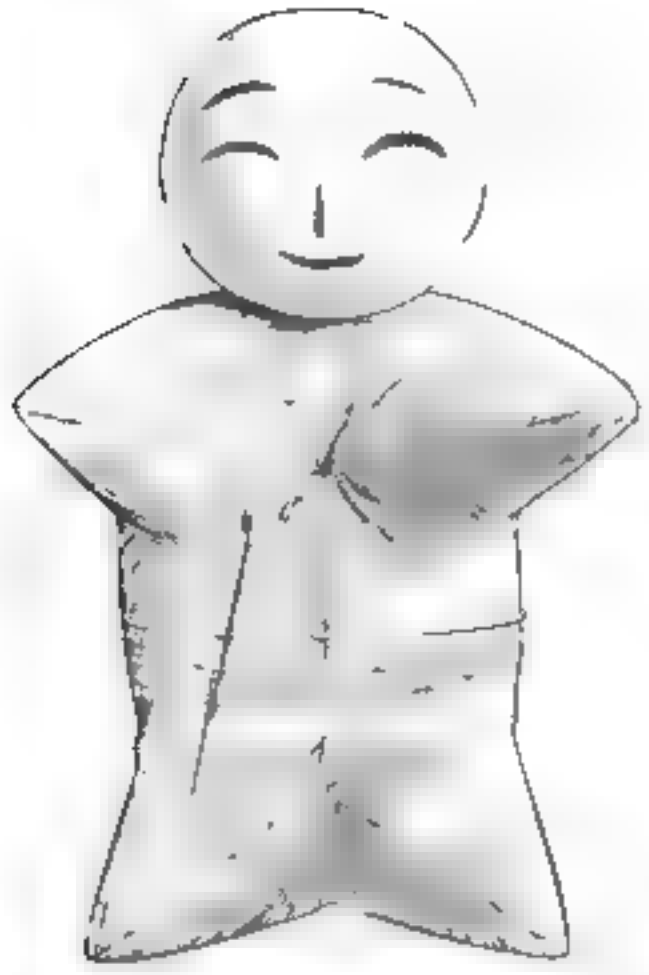
BABOOM

TATAK

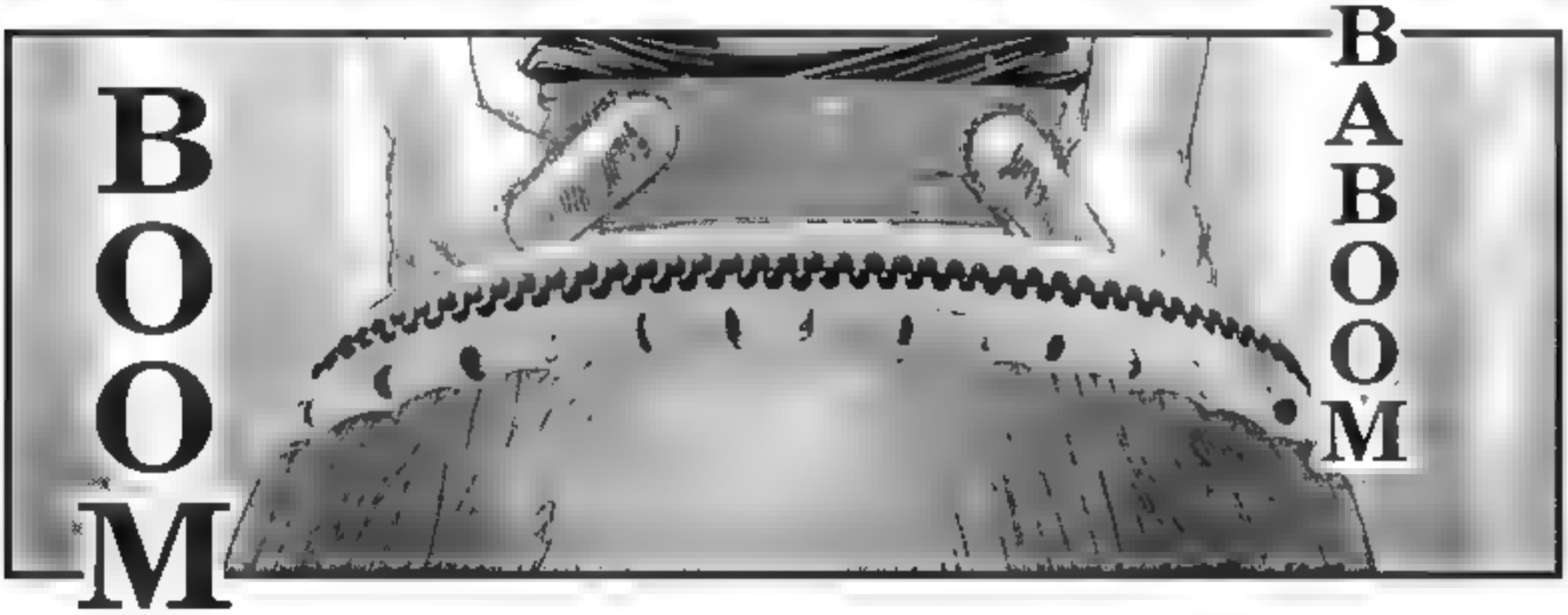
HMM ...

BOOM

MAYBE IT'S LIKE ONE OF THOSE RITUAL SUBSTITUTION DOLLS, AND THE IDEA WAS TO HAVE THE LAND TAKE ON SINS AND IMPURITIES...



...AREN'T THEY?
THESE DOLLS ARE STAND-INS FOR LIVING PEOPLE...


BOOM
BABOOM

BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH
CHIRRUP CHIRRUP CHIRRUP
BZZH BZZH BZZH
HAFF! HAFF
UDEKARI YAKUJOU-MAE
Week days (M-F)
CHIRRUP CHIRRUP CHIRRUP
CHIRRUP CHIRRUP CHIRRUP
GRANNY...

I'VE BEEN FEELIN' LOST EVER SINCE THE DAY OF THE SCHOOL CLOSIN' CEREMONY...

WHAT SHOULD I DO...?

RRRUMBLE
TO TO TO...

AH, THERE Y'ARE.

YA SKIPPED THE CLOSIN' CEREMONY, DIDN'T YA?

WHY'D YA DO THAT?

OH... HEH HEH...

JUST 'COS?

HMM ...?

OH!

MIND IF WE WAIT FOR HIM?

WHAAA !!?

WAY TO GO, MAKI!

...SO MAKI KINDA ASKED ME TO WALK HOME WITH HIM TODAY.

HEY, HOLD ON!!

HEH...!

I'LL GO ON HOME AHEAD OF YA.

I WON'T STAND IN THE WAY OF YOUNG LOVE!

HUH!?

NAW, IT AIN'T LIKE THAT!

BYE-BYYYE!

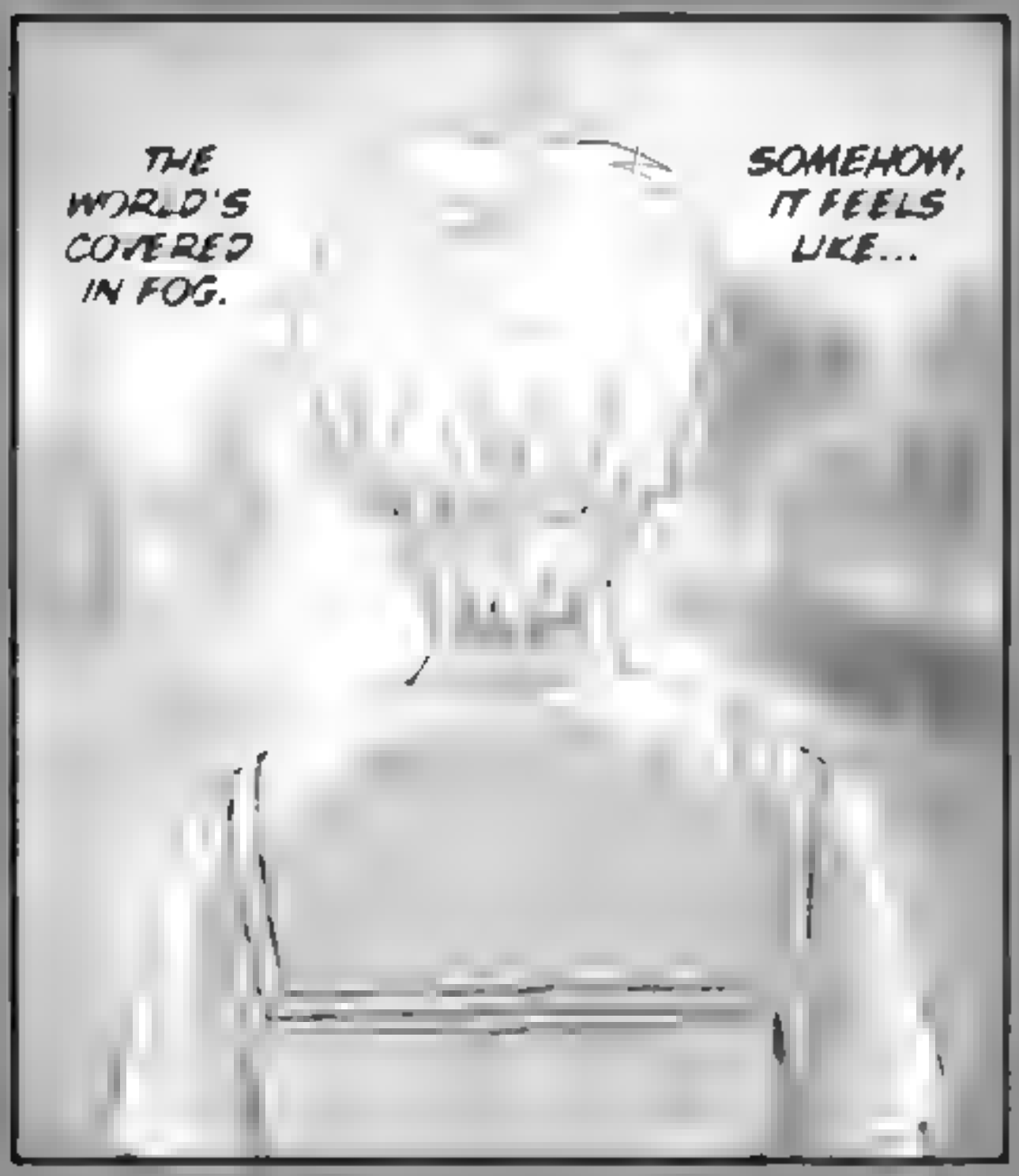
COME OOON...

RRRUMBLE

ゴロロロロ

ゴロ…

PSHHH


THE WORLD'S COVERED IN FOG.
SOMEHOW, IT FEELS LIKE...

"TH'S BODY'S H'S CORPSE."

...WHAT WERE THOSE 'TWO SEEIN', AND WHAT WAS GOIN' THROUGH THEIR HEADS?

[illegible]

BUT WHAT CAN I EVEN DO?

[illegible]

I'M GETTIN' TICKED OFF

[illegible] IT ALL TO HIMSELF... THAT IDIOT!

[illegible]

YUU-CHAN...

WHY'RE YOU HERE?

HUH? NO REASON.

YA JUS' LOOKED KINDA DOWN.

HEH HEH!

WHAT ABOUT MAKI?

HE WENT HOME BY HIMSELF.

Walk home alone.

Not saying I don't want to walk home with you.

GRANNY.

I'M ASHAMED OF MYSELF FOR BEIN' SO USELESS.

EVEN IF I CAN'T FIX THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM...

...I CARE ABOUT UDEKARI, MY FRIENDS, AND YUU-CHAN.

I AT LEAST WANT TO PROTECT THEM...

THUMP

SQUIK

SHWRR SHWRR SHWRR

CHIRRUP CHIRRUP CHIRRUP

THIS EMPTY HOUSE...

...HAS BEEN NOISY FOR A LITTLE WHILE NOW.

THE UDEKARI GHOSTS HAVE BEEN COMING OUTTA HERE LATELY.

I'LL ONLY TAKE A LOOK... IT'LL BE FINE.

SHWRR SHWRR SHWRR

CHIRRUP CHIRRUP

I CAN STILL HEAR WITH MY LEFT EAR.

BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH BZZH

IT'S OPEN...

CREAK

MROW

MEOW!
MRROW!
YOU CAN ALWAYS FIND GHOSTS OF ANIMALS WANDERIN' AROUND...
...BUT THINGS LIKE CATS AND DOGS'RE USUALLY HARMLESS.
WILD ANIMALS LIKE MONKEYS ARE SCARY, THOUGH.
IT'S A "CAT."
SHOULD BE SAFE...
...TO OPEN IT...
BANG

I'M A CAT!

WHAT? WHAT IS THIS?

NO, THAT AIN'T NO CAT!

IT HURTS...! I'VE NEVER HEARD ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE..

RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE RATTLE

OW!

ACH

SLAM

HUSH...

AH-HAA.

SO YOU'RE THE TYPE THAT CAN HEAR 'EM, EH?

CHAPTER 30 END

I LEFT MY PHONE AT HOME, SO I'M GONNA RUN AN' GRAB IT.

'KAY!

JUST HANG OUT AN' DO WHATEVER TILL I GET BACK.

WHAT'RE Y'ALL TALKIN' ABOUT?

CHAPTER 31

IF THESE ARE EFFIGIES, THEN...

...THEY WERE ORIGINALLY PEOPLE...

...AND WERE BASICALLY "SACRIFICED"... IT'S CRAZY TO THINK ABOUT...

SURE IS CREEPY!! AH-HA-HA-HA!

EVEN THE DISPLAY FEELS LIKE IT'S PART OF SOME *MEMORIAL* SERVICE...

NOW, NOW. YA CAN'T GO CALLIN' IT CREEPY.

THEY'RE SACRED OBJECTS.

HOUKOS SERVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE, YA KNOW.

OH, WE BOTH GO TO YAMA HIGH. WE'RE VISITIN' FROM KUBITACHI.

WHERE'RE YOU BOYS FROM?

AH!

SORRY, MA'AM.

OH, IS THAT RIGHT? EH-HEH-HEH-HEH.

THIS GUY'S REEEAL INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY OF THIS FESTIVAL.

OH, YEAH! SURE AM!

OH...
WELL, YOU SEE...
SO WHAT EXACTLY IS A HOUKO'S ROLE...?
UM...
THEY CLOSE HOLES...
...BY SEWIN' 'EM SHUT FROM THE OTHER SIDE.
AS IT GOES IN ASHIDORI...
...."WHEN A HOLE OPENS, BAD THINGS HAPPEN."
FOLKS'VE BEEN SAYIN' IT SINCE WAY BACK WHEN.
HOLES ...?

BAD THINGS? LIKE DISEASES OR DISASTERS?

BUT IT COULD BE SOMETHIN' MUCH WORSE...

THAT'S RIGHT.

THOSE'RE PART OF IT, OF COURSE.

THAT'S WHY, WHENEVER A HOLE OPENED UP...

...WE DID A HOLE PATCHING LIKE THIS TO SETTLE THINGS DOWN.

THAT'S... WHAT THIS FESTIVAL WAS ORIGINALLY ABOUT.

FOLKS WOULD HAVE THE HOUKOS SEW THE HOLES SHUT FROM THE OTHER SIDE...

...WITH NEEDLE AN' THREAD.

WHY USE DOLLS, THOUGH?

HUH...

BUT NOW IT'S MOSTLY JUST FOR SHOW.

LOOK.

THIS WHOLE THING AIN'T QUITE LIKE THE OTHER SUMMER FESTIVALS IN JAPAN, IS IT?

EH HEH HEH.

IT WAS PROB'LY INFLUENCED BY THE RELIGION THAT CAME IN FROM OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE BACK THEN.

CAN'T SAY FOR SURE...

BUT AFTER THEY BUILT A CHURCH HERE...

...THEY STARTED USIN' DOLLS AS A ***SUBSTITUTE***...

...SO WHAT DID THEY USE BEFORE DOLLS?

OH WOW ...

WHO KNOWS ?

MURMUR
BABOOM
BABOOM
MURMUR
MURMUR
BOOM
BUT, WELL... IF THEY HADN'T DONE ALL THAT, THIS PLACE WOULDA BEEN IN A HEAP'A TROUBLE TOO...
MURMUR
MURMUR
BOOM
BOOM
TAK
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
MURMUR
SHH!
NOT SO LOUD!
THEY WERE PUTTIN' HUMANS IN THEM HOLES.
HAD TO BE PEOPLE, RIGHT!?
WELL, TO START, FOLKS IN ASHIDORI WEREN'T ANY DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHER VILLAGES.
THEY BEGAN BY WORSHIPPIN' NOUNUKI-SAMA TOO, AN' ALL.

BACK IN THOSE DAYS, A CHILD'S LIFE WASN'T WORTH AS MUCH AS IT IS NOW...

...SO THE HOUKO DOLLS WERE PROBABLY MADE AS A SORT OF OFFERING FOR THOSE LOST CHILDREN.

AND IF YOU GO BACK FROM THERE, THEY USED TO DO ABORTIONS AND PRACTICE INFANTICIDE...

MOST LIKELY ...

SO THEY WERE PUTTIN' KIDS IN THE HOLES?

...BUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CHILDREN AFTER THAT?

...TO SEW THEM SHUT FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

...THEY'D SEND IN CHILDREN WITH NEEDLES AND THREAD...

SO TO CLOSE THE HOLES...

TO PUT IT IN HUMAN TERMS, THEY PROB'LY DIED.

ONCE YA CROSS OVER, YA CAN'T HOLD ON TA YER BODY.

THAT'S WHY THEY WERE TREATED LIKE SACRIFICES.

ANY CHILD WHO CLOSED A HOLE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO COME BACK

THE ISSUE IS...

CLOSING THE HOLE ITSELF IS SIMPLE.

...IT SEEMS LIKE...

...YOU CAN ONLY DO IT FROM THE OTHER SIDE.

FSH

ASHIZUKA CAVE

A GREAT NUMBER OF LEG BONES
D AT THIS SITE. THE BONES ARI
TO THE CULTURAL PRACTIC

OH MY

THIS IS...A LITTLE...

PLIP

WHERE ARE THEY LEADIN' TO ..?

AND WHAT'S WITH THESE BAGS ..?

I HAVE A BAD FEELIN' ABOUT THIS.

MAKI-KUN ..?

PLIP

BOOM
BOOM
TATAK
BABOOM
BABOOM

MURMUR

IT'S MAKI'S DADDY.

WAIT. WHERE'S YUUTA?

YOSHIKI-KUN! HIKARU-KUN!

MURMUR

MURMUR

HE WENT TO GRAB HIS PHONE.

YA HAVIN' FUN!?

AH, GOTCHA!! SORRY HE'S LEFT Y'ALL ALONE FOR SO LONG!

KIHIN

UM...

WHAT'RE YA GONNA DO WITH THAT BOX AFTER THIS IS DONE?

SURE AM!

YEAH? GREAT !!

OH. THAT?

WE'LL BRING IT OVER TO ASHIZUKA CAVE EARLY TOMORROW MORNIN'...

...AND IT'LL STAY THERE ON DISPLAY FOR A COUPL'A DAYS.

WE KEEP THE DOLLS IN A BOX TO MAKE THINGS EASIER!

HEARD FOLKS USED TO BRING 'EM STRAIGHT OVER, BUT THAT'D BE A REAL HASSLE.

IF YA GOT NOTHIN' BETTER TO DO, HOW ABOUT Y'ALL GO CHECK OUT THE CAVE?

IT AIN'T FAR FROM HERE!!

CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP

SKRSH

CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP CHIRP

BIT OF A WALK, AIN'T IT?

MORE OF A LIGHT HIKE

SKRSH

WHAT'S THE RUSH, KUREBAYASHI-SAN...?

AH, WELL...

SKRSH

OH!!

Y'ALL CAME TO SEE IT TOO!?

THAT SEROW'S DOIN' ITS BEST...

...BUT THE HOLE'S WAY BIGGER THAN I EXPECTED...

I JUST GET THE FEELIN' MAKI-KUN MIGHT BE IN DANGER...

...THEN LET'S MEET UP AT MAKI-KUN'S PLACE AFTERWARD.

GO AHEAD AN' CHECK IT OUT...

THE HECK?

WHERE'D I LEAVE MY PHONE ?

GUESS IT'S IN MY ROOM?

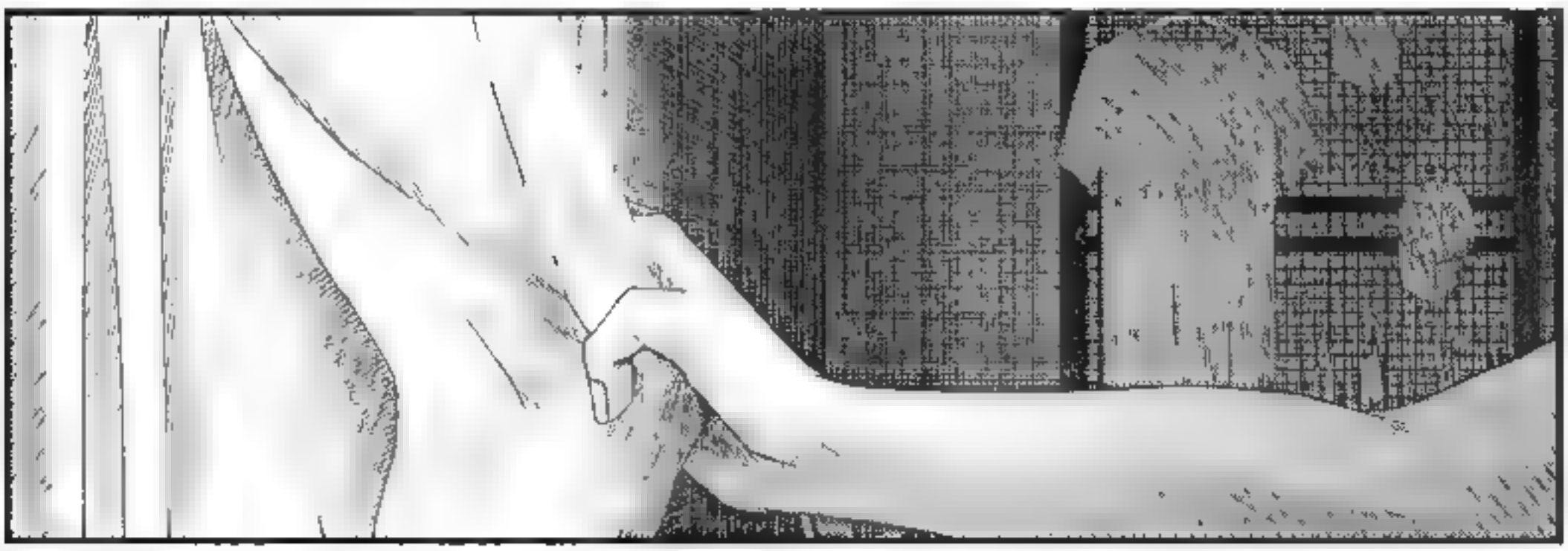
KABOOM

CREAK

SHRIEK

GCHAK

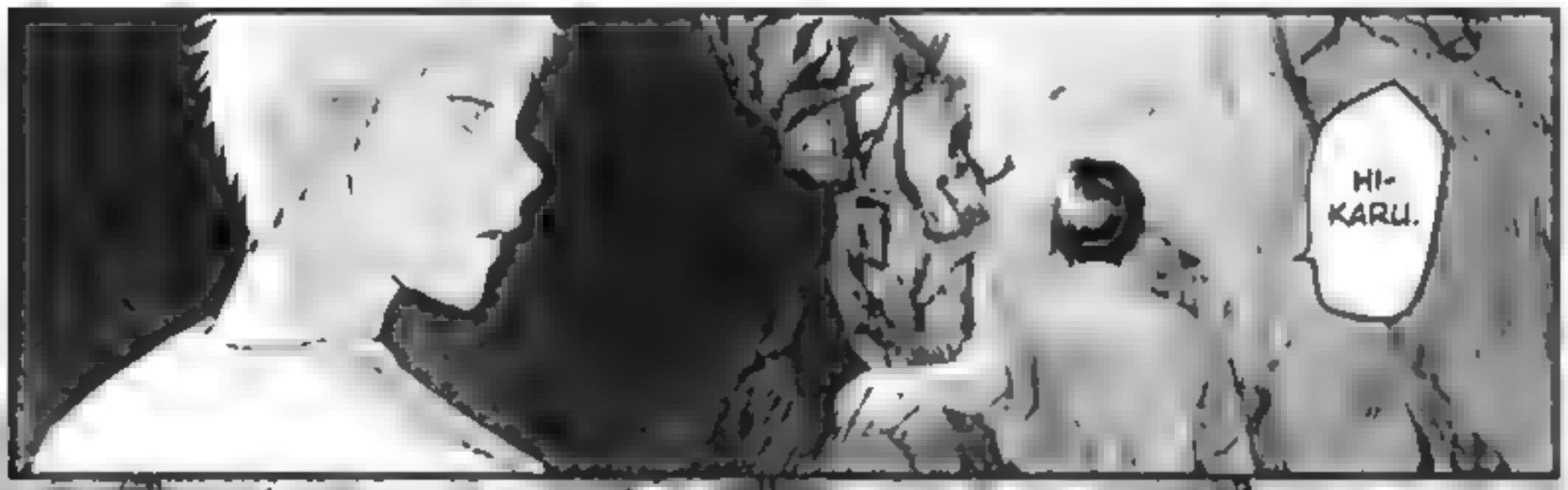
HM?



FWSH

WHAT WAS THAT JUST NOW...?

ASHI-
ZUKA
CAVE



ASHIZUKA CAVE

YEARS AGO, A GREAT NUMBER OF LEG BONES WERE DISCOVERED AT THIS SITE. THE BONES ARE SAID TO BE RELATED TO THE CULTURAL PRACTICE OF SCATTERED BURIALS CENTERED AROUND KIBOGAYAMA THAT WERE COMMON ACROSS THE REGION AT THE TIME. ACCORDING TO LEGEND IN ASHIDORI, A MOUNTAIN GOD OPENED A HOLE TO THE "OTHER SIDE" IN THIS LOCATION. THE HOUKO FESTIVAL, WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED LONG AGO FOR THE PURPOSE OF CLOSING THAT HOLE, CONTINUES TO BE HELD TO THIS DAY.

YEAH... THAT'S PROB'LY HOW THEY INTERPRETED THINGS IN ASHIDORI.

SO WAS THAT MOUNTAIN GOD...ME?

AH, MAYBE NOT. MUSTA MEANT NOUNUKI-SAMA.

AND NOUNUKI-SAMA... NEVER REALLY EXISTED, RIGHT?

FOLKS OFFERED UP HEADS, SPLIT UP THE VILLAGE, BURIED THE REST OF THE BODIES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE REGION...

WITH THINGS AS TOUGH AS THEY WERE, HAVIN' FEWER MOUTHS TO FEED PROB'LY WORKED IN THEIR FAVOR...

BUT THAT DIDN'T BRING DOWN THE AMOUNT OF IMPURITIES, AND LIFE WAS STILL HARD FOR THE VILLAGERS, HUH?

THEY EVEN SACRIFICED PEOPLE TO CLOSE THIS HOLE.

SINCE SWITCHING TO DOLLS, IT'S ALL BEEN FOR SHOW...

...BUT I WAS PROB'LY IN THE MOUNTAIN COLLECTIN' IMPURITIES BY THE TIME THEY DID.

THE HOLE IS REAL, AT THE VERY LEAST.

I THINK THERE WAS A REAL PURPOSE TO THIS "HOLE PATCHING" RITUAL.

FLUSH

...MUSTA NOTICED THE EXISTENCE OF THE HOLES...

...AND WERE DOIN' WHATEVER THEY COULD JUST TO GET BY.

ASHIDORI, KUBITACHI, UDEKARI, DARUMASUTE, AND THE ABANDONED VILLAGES—

SURELY EVERYONE IN THIS HUMAN-SHAPED LAND...

...AND EVEN WHEN THEY CLOSED ONE HOLE, BECAUSE THE SOURCE OF THE HOLES WAS STILL THERE, ANOTHER WOULD JUST OPEN UP AGAIN.

THEY STILL SUFFERED, DESPITE WORSHIPPIN' [illegible]-SAMA

THEY PUT EVERY LAST BIT OF EFFORT INTO COMIN' UP WITH SOLUTIONS...

...AND MANAGED TO SURVIVE IN THIS LAND...

...BY SACRIFICIN' THE LIVES OF OTHERS TO EXTEND THEIR OWN.

PLIP
...WE'RE LEFT WITH THIS MESS.
AND BECAUSE OF ALL THAT...

...THIS HOLE CAN ONLY BE CLOSED FROM THE OTHER SIDE, RIGHT?

.....

AND...

...IF A HUMAN CROSSES OVER, THEY'RE PRETTY MUCH GUARANTEED TO DIE...

BUT...

...I CAN GO THERE, NO PROBLEM...

...SEEIN' AS I AIN'T HUMAN.

THAT'S KINDA COOL...
AN ANIMAL GUARD-IAN SPIRIT...

IT'S A WIN-WIN FOR THE IMPURITY TOO!!
IT GETS TO SLOWLY SUCK UP LIFE ENERGY FROM MEMBERS OF THE MAKI CLAN!
BUT THAT WHOLE FAMILY IS WAY TOO ENERGETIC, SO IT ACTUALLY WORKS OUT PERFECTLY! AH-HA-HA!
...

Local Team Go to Koushien

After their third-ever qualification last year [illegible] slump. Akino[illegible] again [illegible] mark[illegible] the fou[illegible]

MAN, ○○ HIGH SURE IS SOMETHIN'.

I MEAN, YAMA HIGH'S GOT A GOOD TEAM, BUT IT'S BEEN A SPELL SINCE THEY'VE GONE TO KOUSHIEN...

THAT SAID, FACT OF THE MATTER IS, THIS SCHOOL HAD THE BEST PROGRAM FOR ME.

BONUS

...AND FOLKS'RE ALREADY FORMIN' CLIQUES...

IT'S BEEN TWO WEEKS SINCE I ENROLLED...

チラ GLANCE

DESK NEIGH-BORS.

THE GIRLS.

KIDS FROM THE SAME AREA.

THERE'S BARELY ANYONE COMIN' HERE FROM ASHI-DORI...

HEY, YUUTA!

AND...

SURE THING

LET'S GO!

...GUYS WHO SORTA CLICKED WITH EACH OTHER DURING CLUB TRYOUTS.

HEY, WHAT ABOUT YOU, YUUTA?

Anik

Check it out... got a huge honkin zit

Didn't make any friends my first year. Folks thought I talked funny

GIRLS! LOL.

WHO D'YA THINK'S CUTE?

HUH?

WHAT'RE WE TALKIN' 'BOUT?

AH, YEAH, I FEEL YA THERE.

SORTA LOOKS LIKE THAT ONE POPULAR ACTRESS, RIGHT?

HOW 'BOUT SAITOU?

GOTTA BE KAKITA-SAN, RIGHT? SHE'S A REAL CUTIE!

FOR REAL? I STILL CAN'T KEEP ANY OF THEIR NAMES OR FACES STRAIGHT...

LEMME THINK...

HMM...

ANYONE COME TO MIND?

JUST PICK FROM THE ONES YA CAN REMEM-BER.

SHE SITS NEXT TO ME AND ALWAYS PICKS UP MY ERASER WHEN IT FALLS ON THE FLOOR...

HM.

WELL, HOW 'BOUT TADOKORO, THEN?

UH, YEAH, THROUGH SCANS. LOL.

BY THE WAY, ARE Y'ALL READING *AKUGIRI*?

I ONLY WATCH THE ANIME.

WHAT ..? FOR REAL!?

WHO'S SHE AGAIN?

SORRY.

CAN'T PICTURE HER FACE. LOL.

YUUKI TADO-KORO?

HUH...

HUH?

BUT WE'RE STILL IN THE TRIAL PERIOD FOR CLUBS AND TEAMS, RIGHT?

I DON'T THINK I'M GONNA SWITCH.

AN' I WANNA WARM UP ALREADY.

AH!

I GOTTA GET TO PRACTICE.

HA HA HA!

GOOD LUCK! LOL.

WOW, YOU'RE TAKIN' IT SERI-OUS.

ALL MY CLOSE FRIENDS ENDED UP AT OTHER SCHOOLS...

I WONDER WHAT THE KIDS FROM MY MIDDLE SCHOOL ARE UP TO.

I WISH

HEY.

YER IN CLASS A, RIGHT?

HUH? UH... YEAH.

OH YES, SU-ZUKI-SEN-SEI?

NOW, LEMME TELL Y'ALL SUM-THIN'!

DAG-NAB-BIT!

'RE YA LISTEN-IN'!?

COOL. SO D'YA KNOW WHO THIS IS?

COACH HARA?

...

HA HA HA HA!

WHAT'S YER DEAL!?

HEY, WAIT!

BFFT!

HA HA!

YEP!!

GOT IIIIT!

OH.

JUST WANTED TO SEE IF MY IMPRESSION WORKED.

THANKS FOR YER HELP

JUST HIKARU IS FINE.

HA HA HA!

WHAT'S THAT KANJI? SUMETHIN' DUU-KUN?

MAN, THAT BRINGS ME BACK!!

...AND NEXT THING I KNEW, HIKARU AN' ME WERE BUDDIES!

BUT I FELT LIKE I'D HAVE MORE FUN WITH Y'ALL.

BUT YER STILL FRIENDS WITH KOBAYASHI AN' HIS CREW, AIN'TCHA?

YEAH, I SURE. MEAN, THEY'RE GOOD GUYS AN' ALL.

...THE HECK KINDA LOOK IS THAT!?

BONUS END

BAD ENDINGS THAT YOSHIKI AVOIDED

IF HE HADN'T ACCEPTED "HIKARU"

IF HE'D CONTINUED TREATING "HIKARU" AS THE REAL HIKARU

IF "HIKARU" HAD GONE BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN

IF HE'D USED "HIKARU" SELFISHLY

Q&A

Q Don't Yoshiki's bangs always get in the way of things?

They do, so he has a habit of swinging his head to move his bangs aside. At the same time, Yoshiki sees his bangs as curtains to shield himself from the outside world, so he can't relax without them.

Q In the first chapter when Yoshiki first realizes Hikaru is a fake, "Hikaru" says, "Please don't tell anyone... I don't want to kill you," but if Yoshiki had refused to keep his secret, would "Hikaru" have actually killed Yoshiki?

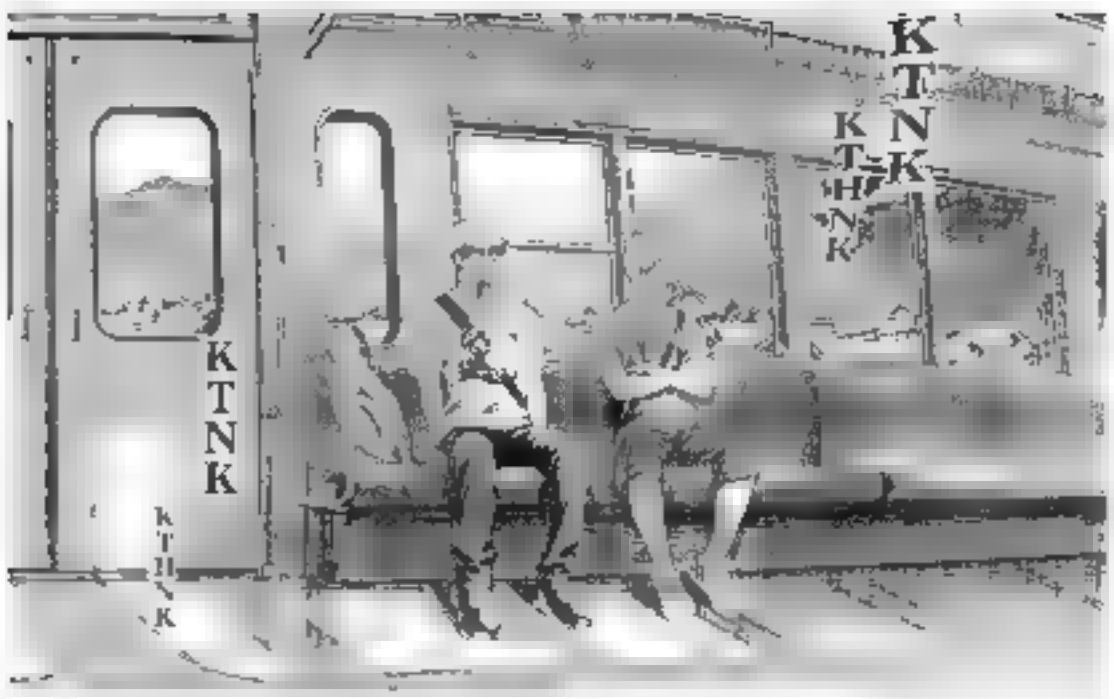
— Yes, I think he would've killed Yoshiki. He probably would've regretted it after, though.

Q Does "Hikaru" still have Hikaru's internal organs?

——Yes, he does. His body is perfectly normal and healthy, and "Hikaru" has complete control over it down to the cellular level. The sludge-like material inside him doesn't even show up on medical tests.

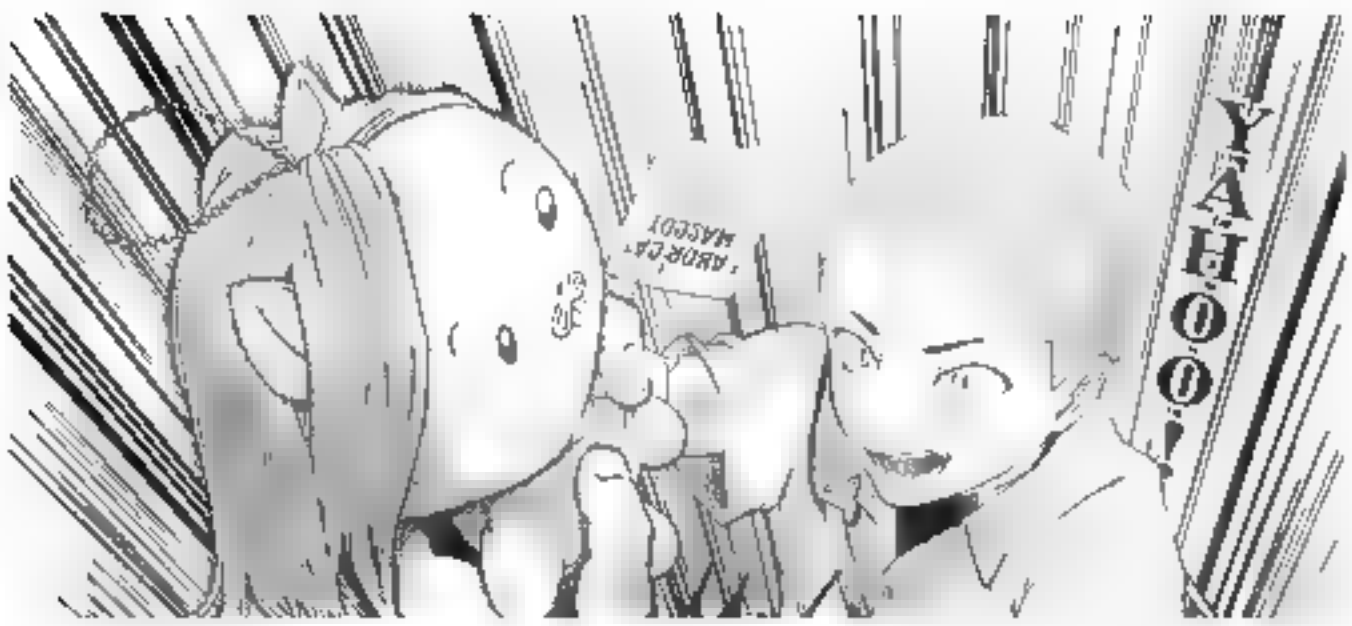
Q How does Yoshiki's impression of "Hikaru" differ from his impression of the real Hikaru?

——Yoshiki's impression has changed quite a lot. The real Hikaru kept more of a boundary between Yoshiki and himself, and he was more mature.



Q If Kubitachi were a big city, what kinds of personalities would Yoshiki and Hikaru have?

—— I don't think they'd be too different. There is a part of Yoshiki that blames the countryside for his gloominess, but there might not actually be much of a connection there. Hikaru would probably adapt to anywhere he went.

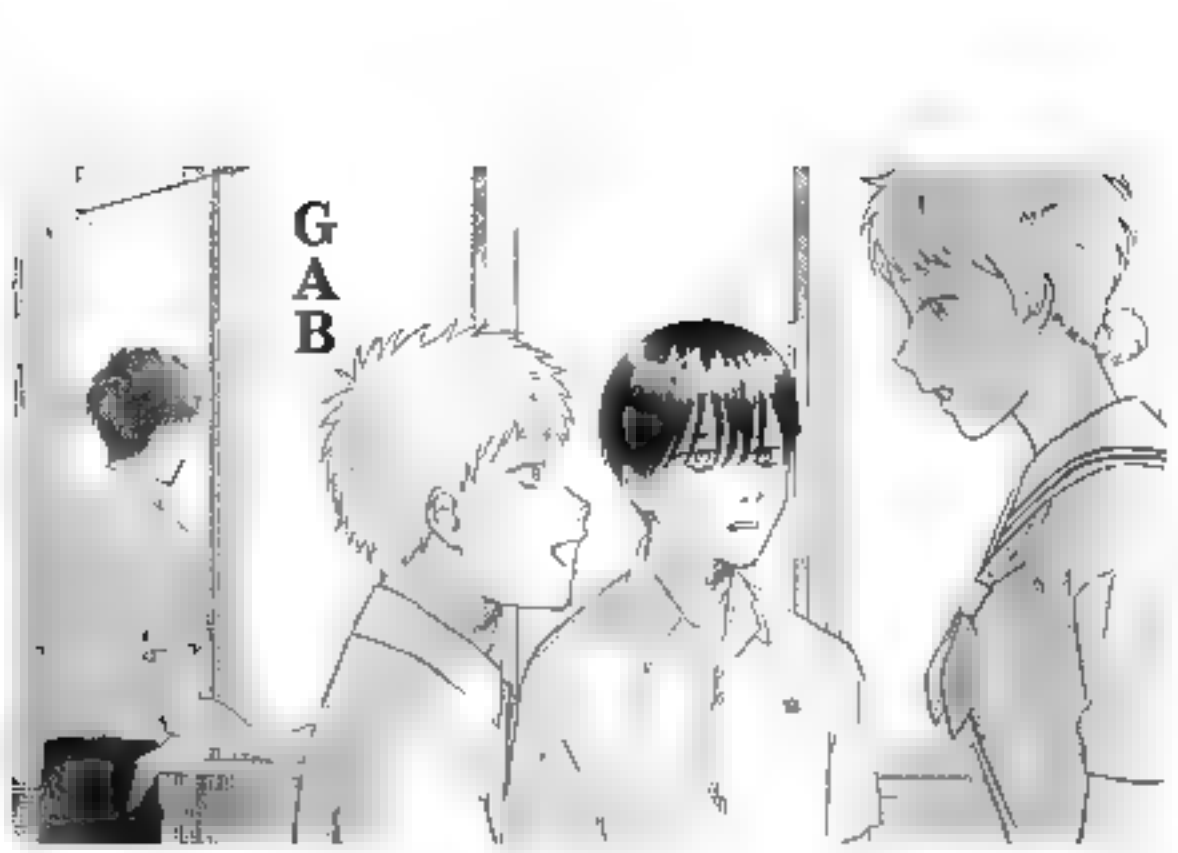


Q What are the names of Yoshiki's parents and Hikaru's mom?

——Yoshiki's mother is Satoko, and his father is Toshinori.
Hikaru's mother is Yuki, and his father is Kouhei.

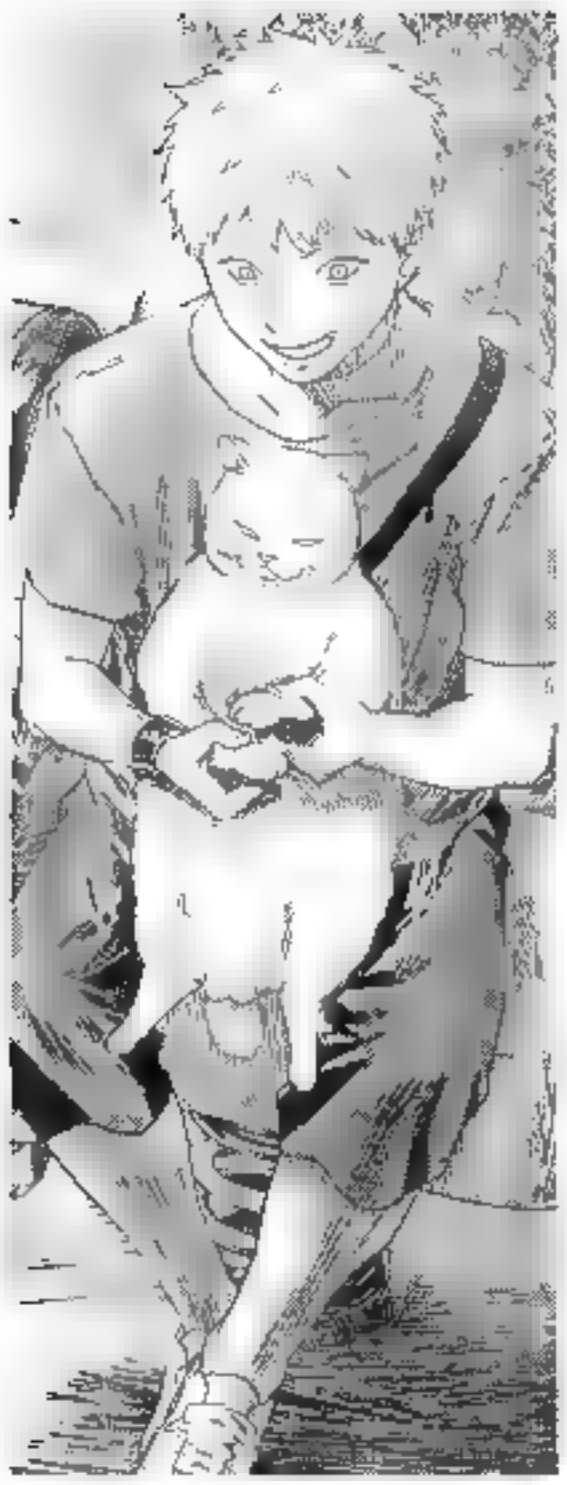
Q In Volume 2, I seem to remember Maki was planning to give someone a mascot plush as a gift. What happened with that?

—— Its current whereabouts are actually depicted in the story! If you're interested, try to find it.



Q I'd like to know what the main characters' dislikes and fears are!

Yoshiki: People talking about him.
"Hikaru": Not belonging anymore.
Asako: Having her normal, everyday life fall apart.
Yuuki: Uninteresting, troublesome things.
Maki: Losing the ability to play baseball.
Kurebayashi: Seeing children suffer.
Tanaka: Dying for nothing.



Q I'd like to know what everyone's favorite animals are.

"Hikaru": Cats
Because they're funny.
Hikaru before he died: Lizards
Because they're like dragons.
Asako: Dogs
Because she has one and likes the smell of their paw pads.
Yuuki: Rabbits
More as a design motif than the actual animal.
Maki: Cheetahs
Because they're part of the logo for his favorite sports brand.
Yoshiki: Dewdrop Spiders
Because although dewdrop spiders share kleptoparasitism (invading and residing in other spiders' webs) as a common trait, he likes the variety within the genus and finds something thrilling about their way of life. He was also considering huntsman spiders and Japanese carpenter ants, but he ultimately chose what he thought would be the most interesting answer.

NOO OOO!!!
OH! A MALE HUNTSMAN SPIDER!

START

IMPURITIES EMERGING FROM HOLES MADE LIFE MORE DIFFICULT IN THE REGION, BUT THOSE WHO WERE UNAWARE OF THEM CONTINUED LIVING THERE TO MINE MERCURY.

MERCURY-BASED ABORTION PILLS INSPIRED THE CREATION OF THE CULT OF "UNUKI-SAN."

AFTER A FARMER'S HEAD VANISHED, PEOPLE BEGAN A CULT WHERE THEY OFFERED DECAPITATED HEADS TO "NOUNUKI-SAMA." THE VILLAGE WAS SPLIT UP INTO FIVE PARTS, AND MANY PEOPLE WERE KILLED.

A HISTORY OF KUBITACHI

IN 1749, AN "ILLEGITIMATE" APPEARED IN THE MOUNTAINS. AN ANCESTOR OF THE INDOU CLAN MISTOOK IT FOR THE GOD "NOUNUKI-SAMA" AND PRAYED TO IT, RESULTING IN MASS DEATHS.

THE VILLAGERS CAME TO BELIEVE THAT "NOUNUKI-SAMA" WAS A CURSED GOD AND FORCED THE INDOU CLAN AND THEIR DESCENDANTS TO PERFORM A RITUAL IN ORDER TO PACIFY THE GOD.

WHO CAN WE RELY ON NOW ?

MISSIONARIES ARRIVED, AND AFTER CONVERTING TO THIS NEW RELIGION, MANY VILLAGERS FORGOT ABOUT "NOUNUKI-SAMA" OVER TIME. ONLY IN KUBITACHI DOES THE RITUAL CONTINUE TO THIS DAY.

MANY YEARS PASSED. THE STORY OF THIS MANGA BEGINS IN PRESENT DAY WITH HIKARU INDOU FALLING WHILE PERFORMING HIS RITUAL AND MAKING A WISH TO AN "ILLEGITIMATE" JUST BEFORE DYING.

Afterword

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR READING VOLUME 6.
STARTING WITH THIS VOLUME, WE'VE BEGUN THE "HOLE CLOSING ARC." THINGS ARE GETTING A LITTLE MORE COMPLICATED, BUT ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW IS, IF THEY DON'T CLOSE THE HOLES, THE VILLAGE AND TOWNS WILL BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE. IT WOULD BRING ME PLEASURE IF YOU CONTINUE FOLLOWING "HIKARU," WHO REMAINS JUST AS DANGEROUS AS EVER, AND YOSHIKI, WHO CONTINUES TO PREPARE FOR THE WORST

ASSISTANT:
NOMU
AS ALWAYS, THANK YOU!

MOKUMOKUREN

Next Volume Preview

What awaits them as they begin to move forward—

At last they come face to face with the "hole" that leads to disaster.

THE SUMMER HIKARU DIED

continues in Volume 7...

THE SUMMER HIKARU DIED

TRANSLATION NOTES

COMMON HONORIFICS

***-san*:** The Japanese equivalent of Mr./Mrs./Miss. If a situation calls for politeness, this is the fail-safe honorific.
***-sama*:** Conveys great respect; may also indicate that the social status of the speaker is lower than that of the addressee.
***-kun*:** Used most often when referring to boys, this indicates affection or familiarity. Occasionally used by older men among their peers, but it may also be used by anyone referring to a person of lower standing.
***-chan*:** An affectionate honorific indicating familiarity used mostly in reference to girls; also used in reference to cute persons or animals regardless of gender.
no honorific: Indicates familiarity or closeness; if used without permission or reason, addressing someone in this manner would constitute an insult.
***-(o)nii/nee, nii-san/nee-san, aniki/aneki*:** Terms of endearment meaning "big brother" and "big sister" that may be more widely used to address any person who is like a sibling, regardless of whether they are related or not.

GENERAL

Hikaru: The Chinese character for Hikaru's name means "light."

Currency conversion: It was once a general rule of thumb that ¥100 is worth approximately one American dollar. In recent years, however, the purchasing power of the yen has gone down, with ¥100 being closer to 70¢.

PAGE 87

Inari: A deity in Japanese mythology. The god of foxes, rice cultivation, and prosperity.

PAGE 107

Hair: In some Japanese schools, it's a tradition for baseball team members to shave their heads. This is why Maki hadn't shaved his head since he stopped going to practice.

PAGE 175

Koushien: Refers to Japan's National High School Baseball Championship, an annual event held in the Hanshin Koushien Stadium.

THE SUMMER HIKARU DIED

MOKUMOKUREN

6

TRANSLATION: AJANI OLOYE

LETTERING: ABIGAIL BLACKMAN

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

HIKARU GA SHINDA NATSU Vol. 6
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First published in Japan in 2024 by KADOKAWA CORPORATION, Tokyo. English translation rights arranged with KADOKAWA CORPORATION, Tokyo through Tuttle-Mori Agency, Inc.

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150 West 30th Street, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10001

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First Yen Press Edition: October 2025
Edited by Abigail Blackman and Yen Press Editorial: Jacquelyn Li
Designed by Yen Press Design: Liz Parlett

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2023936587

ISBNs: 979-8-8554-1975-7 (paperback)
979-8-8554-1976-4 (ebook)

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

WOR

Printed in the United States of America